Author:
Tsuyoshi Fujitaka

Illustrator:
Chisato Naruse

My Instant Death Ability is So Overpowered, No One in This Other World Stands a Chance Against Me!

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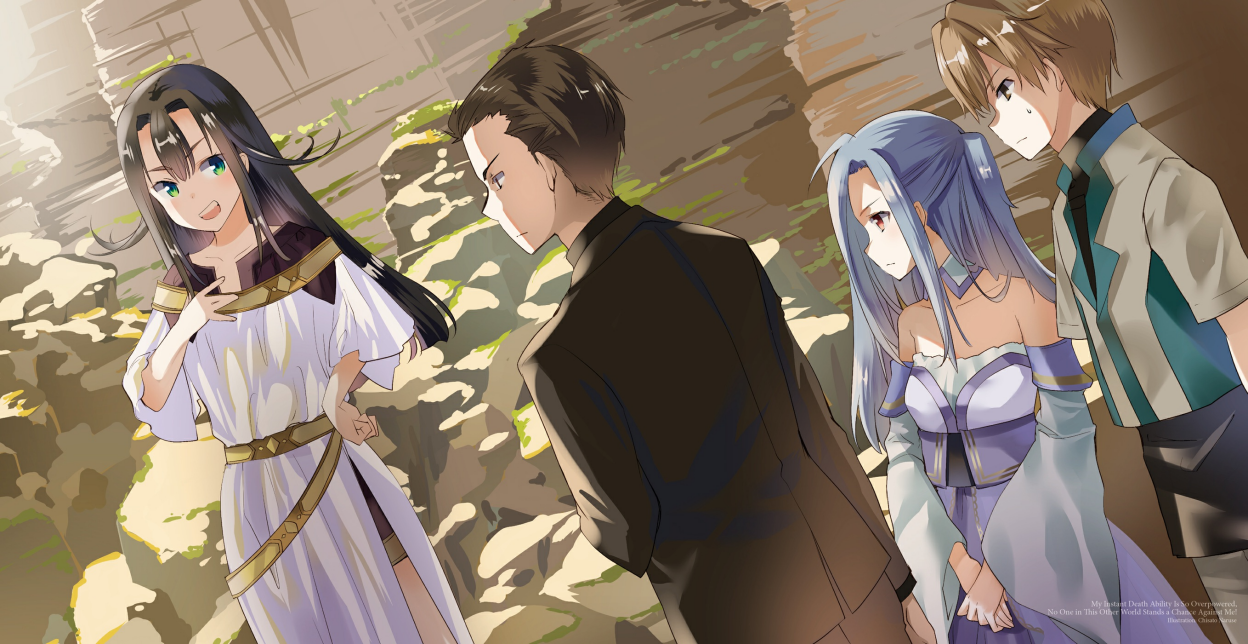

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Illustration: Chisato Naitou

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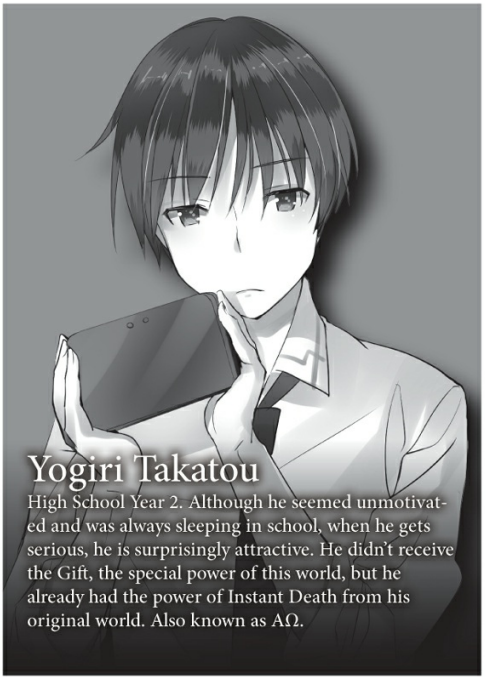
CHARACTERS

Tomochika Dannoura

High School Year 2. Although she looks quite attractive and has quite the ample chest, her role is unfortunately that of the Straight Man. Like Yogiri, she did not receive the power of the Gift, but she is trained in a martial art derived from the ancient Dannoura style of archery.

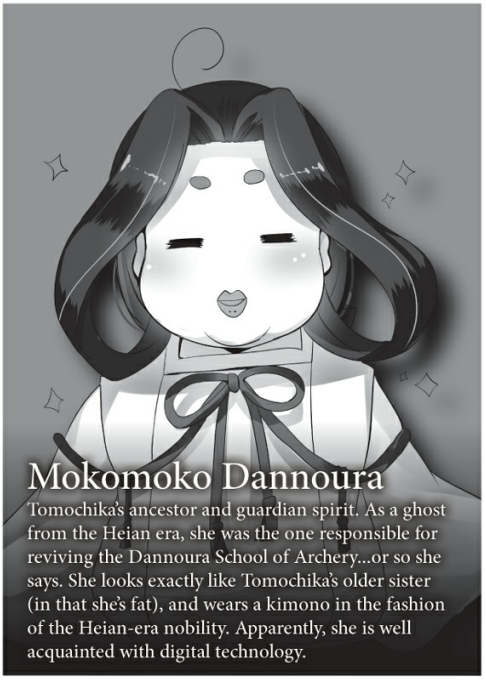


Yogiri Takatou

High School Year 2. Although he seemed unmotivated and was always sleeping in school, when he gets serious, he is surprisingly attractive. He didn't receive the Gift, the special power of this world, but he already had the power of Instant Death from his original world. Also known as AΩ.

Asaka Takatou

A female college student who, while struggling to find work, ended up taking an interview at a suspicious institution known as the Independent Higher Life Form Research Facility, and unfortunately ended up finding work there. She normally ties her long hair up behind her head. At her new work place, she met AΩ, whom she named Yogiri.



Mokomoko Dannoura

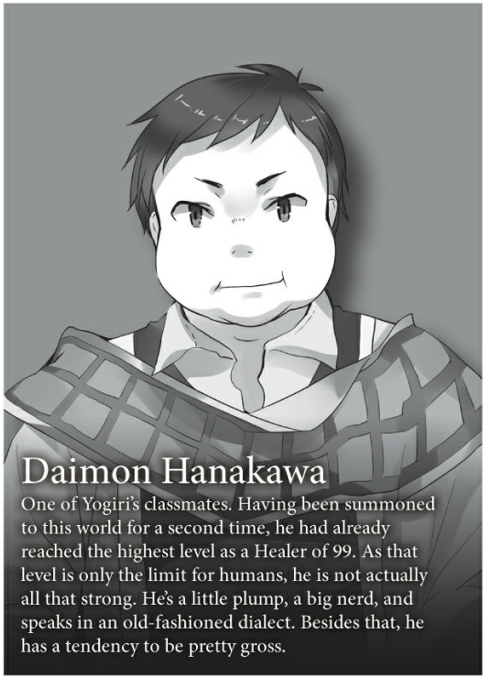
Tomochika's ancestor and guardian spirit. As a ghost from the Heian era, she was the one responsible for reviving the Dannoura School of Archery...or so she says. She looks exactly like Tomochika's older sister (in that she's fat), and wears a kimono in the fashion of the Heian-era nobility. Apparently, she is well acquainted with digital technology.

Ryouko Ninomiya

One of Yogiri's classmates. Actually, she was dispatched by the research facility that had hidden him to watch Yogiri. She has a tool designed to monitor him installed on her smartphone. Though she was a ninja back home, in this world her class is Samurai. She fights in a traditional Samurai's garb with two swords.

Enju Sumeragi

A girl who came to hide at the Independent Higher Order Lifeform Research Institute while Yogiri was living there with Asaka. One of the few people Yogiri grew attached to. For that reason, robots were made with her appearance to combat him. Part of the Sumeragi family, who rule Japan from the shadows.



Daimon Hanakawa

One of Yogiri's classmates. Having been summoned to this world for a second time, he had already reached the highest level as a Healer of 99. As that level is only the limit for humans, he is not actually all that strong. He's a little plump, a big nerd, and speaks in an old-fashioned dialect. Besides that, he has a tendency to be pretty gross.

Carol S. Lane

One of Yogiri's classmates. An American who joined their class as she entered high school. Like Ryouko, she was tasked with monitoring Yogiri, but she works for the Agency. Her class in this world is Ninja, and she wears a red ninja outfit and forehead protector when fighting. Her weapon is a ninja sword.

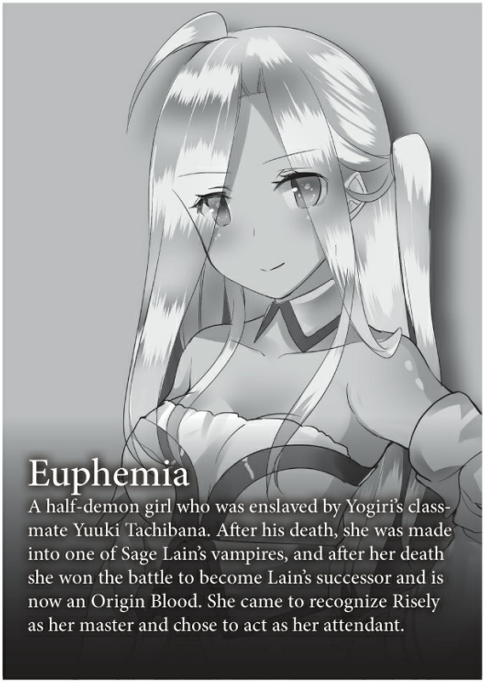
CHARACTERS

Hiruko

A god and an Aggressor who forced her way into this world. Using another Aggressor known as the Wolf King, she was looking for her mother, Luu. After finding Luu with Yogiri's group and realizing she hadn't fully recovered, Hiruko joined them to search for the remaining Philosopher's Stones.

Luu

A girl created when the Philosopher's Stones Yogiri's group had collected fused together. She started as a baby but after fusing with seven stones took on the appearance of a twelve-year-old. According to her daughter, Hiruko, she is a rather high-ranking god. For some reason, she clings to Yogiri as her "daddy."



Euphemia

A half-demon girl who was enslaved by Yogiri's classmate Yuuki Tachibana. After his death, she was made into one of Sage Lain's vampires, and after her death she won the battle to become Lain's successor and is now an Origin Blood. She came to recognize Risely as her master and chose to act as her attendant.

Risley

The Sage Lain, being the highest level of vampire known as an Origin Blood, challenged Yogiri in hopes he would be able to put an end to her immortality. She died per her wishes and left behind this girl, a replica of herself modified to be her ideal. She only has a small part of Lain's memories.

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ACT 1

Chapter 1 — Call Me the Ultimate Extermination God, UEG!

Wipe out all life in this world. Haruto couldn't help but hesitate after hearing that instruction from the Overlord. She was a god that even Zakuro served. She definitely possessed immeasurable power, but there still should have been limits to what she could do.

From his travels across this world, Haruto knew it was populated by powerful individuals. Sages, Aggressors, the sealed away Dark Gods, visitors from other worlds, not to mention the gods that ruled the world itself. There were more than he could count. Throwing a small tantrum was one thing, but attempting to wipe out all life in the world was a large enough disaster that it would inevitably threaten the other powerful beings that called this world home. No matter how powerful the Overlord was, he found it hard to believe that would be such an easy task to accomplish.

"What is your problem? What is that gross expression for? Do you have something to say about my orders? Do you? Actually, who the hell are you?"

They were in a cave deep underground. The Overlord was staring at Haruto with suspicion. After emerging from the lump of meat of the twin hydra monsters, the Overlord had taken on the form of a young girl and at some point donned a simple white robe. Though she was small, she appeared to be about Haruto's age.

"This is Haruto. I took him in since he was about to die. I thought it might have been fate, so I had him help in searching for you. In the end he didn't help much, but he did work quite hard. You should really be thanking him, so calling him gross is totally uncalled for. You're giving a bad first impression of yourself."

"I see," the Overlord replied. "That must have been a struggle for you. And who is she?"

Haruto was relieved that he had at least survived the moment. He hadn't intended his doubts to show on his face, but it seemed that much hesitation

was enough for the Overlord to consider it defiance.

“She appears to be a member of the tribe you created. Do you not remember her?”

“Hm? No...my apologies. I seem to remember nothing. Well, I am sure it will come to me in time.”

“Her name is Euphemia. These two are my subordinates, so they’ve automatically come to support you as well. Is that okay?”

“I suppose so. I will allow it. I am quite benevolent to my allies, so please be at ease in your interactions with me.”

Despite being told that, Haruto felt like being relaxed around her was impossible. First of all, there was no point in speaking with her at all. Fundamentally, he just needed to do what Zakuro told him to. He was nowhere near Zakuro’s level, but he could at least converse with him.

“Hmm... It seems you have grown quite tense. At this rate things will be rather challenging in the future. Go ahead, try speaking with me.”

Apparently the Overlord was interested in speaking with him. But he couldn’t say a word in response. If he made her upset, he would die. It was far better for him to say nothing at all than risk offending her.

“Anything is okay. I promise I will not be angry with you. How about this: why not begin by introducing yourself?”

“My name is Haruto Ootori. I came here from another world...umm, Miss Overlord...”

“Ah, I am not a fan of that name.” She sounded unhappy. Haruto immediately regretted trying to speak with her.

“You had no problem with that name before, did you?” Zakuro asked.

“I have changed my mind.”

“Don’t you think that’s being a bit rough on him?”

“You may simply refer to me by my name.”

“Umm...may I ask what your name is?” Haruto managed to squeeze out.

“Are you telling me you do not even know my name?” She seemed even more displeased, but even Haruto found that unreasonable. He hadn’t heard so much as a clue as to what her name might be, let alone the name itself.

“To be fair, I don’t know your name either,” Zakuro added.

“Zakuro, you go too far. Even my boundless mercy has its limits.”

“But you once said that as the strongest being in existence you didn’t need a name, so you erased it from all records and everyone’s memories. So of

course it's been erased from my memories as well."

"Hm. Did I do that? I suppose I did."

"So Overlord is fine for a name, isn't it?"

"Wait! Nothing I have said shall ever be retracted! As such, you may no longer refer to me as the Overlord!"

"Then what should we call you?"

"Hmm...good question. Very well. Let us decide on a name now."

"You were so worked up about wiping out all life in this world a minute ago. Are you sure you want to waste time on this?"

"I do not mind. I have no need to complete their annihilation so quickly. I will spend as much time as I wish, engendering despair in all life here until I become bored. Any who live in this world were complicit in my being locked away, after all. I will make them all regret it!"

"Okay. Then please go ahead and think of a name."

"Hmm...a temporary name should be sufficient for now. A name that strikes fear into the hearts of all those who live in this world. Zakuro, do you have any ideas?"

"Not really."

"Then you, Haruto. Do you have a suggestion?"

Haruto jumped as the conversation suddenly turned to him. His mind seized up in fear, making it almost impossible to think, but he couldn't just say no. If he shrank back now, he'd be killed. That was the impression he got.

"Umm...how about a name referring to what you are the god of?"

"Hmm...but I am a god of all things. Unified God. Absolute God. Ultimate God. None of them sound particularly good, do they?"

"Then how about a name based on your goal?"

"I see. My goal is to wipe out all life in this world. Very well! Call Me the Ultimate Extermination God, UEG!"

"Great. If I had known this is where we'd end up, I'd have tried harder to think of something. Ultimate Extermination God, huh? Are you sure you're okay with that?" Zakuro's voice was filled with regret. It seemed unlikely that anything would change her mind.

"Indeed! You may introduce me to the people of this world as such. Hearing this name shall drop all the denizens of this world into the pit of despair!"

I guess the abbreviation matches the English name because of the

automatic translation?

It was a terrible name. They all thought it, but none could express the sentiment. No matter the reason, if their feelings became known, they'd be killed immediately. Haruto desperately tried to keep all traces of those thoughts from showing on his face.

"Anyway, we were in the middle of something. Try speaking with me. You have yet another strange expression on your face, so it seems something has occurred to you. You may ask me anything."

A chill ran down Haruto's spine, thinking she had read his mind. She was a god, after all. Reading his thoughts may have been easy for her. Haruto looked pleadingly at Zakuro.

"Just be honest. The Overlord...err, Lady UEG, was it? As a god, her words are absolute, and that goes for what she says about herself as well. She would never go back on her own word. Right?"

"I-Indeed. No matter how foolish or infuriating your words may be, I will not punish you."

"By the way, unless it's something really important, we don't read people's minds. So you'll be fine no matter what you say. Just relax and answer."

"Well if you instruct him to lie to me, that defeats the purpose. No matter. I will not be so strict."

After all that, Haruto couldn't just stay silent. But of course, he still couldn't say that her name sounded stupid.

"Then...you mentioned that you were the strongest, ultimate god. In that case, what led to you being locked up in a place like this?"

"Ah, I'm also kind of curious about that," Zakuro added. "Being locked away explains why you never came home after leaving on a whim, but the fact someone was able to trap you is bizarre in and of itself. What happened?"

They were honest questions, but they could have been taken as doubting her strength. Haruto had regretted his words the moment he spoke them, but he was relieved at Zakuro echoing the question.

"Well, you see...though there is no room to doubt my position as the most powerful god, even as the strongest, it is possible for me to be defeated. For example, say my power was one hundred. If the second most powerful being was ninety and the third was eighty, the two of them working together would

be one hundred and seventy. Even someone as powerful as me would struggle against those odds, no?"

"Sounds like an excuse to me." Zakuro voiced the thought that had immediately occurred to Haruto.

"What?!"

"But more importantly, if that second most powerful person is still here, don't you think wiping out all life in this world could be a little difficult?"

"While I am only vaguely aware of what happened after being trapped, it appears that the second most powerful being has also been sealed away, although my perception of that until now has been as if I were half asleep."

"I see. So your tantrum earlier was because you hadn't quite woken up yet?"

"Putting that aside, at present, I do not sense any beings capable of posing a threat to me."

"You said you didn't want to wipe out all life here all at once, so how exactly do you want to do it?"

"If my only interest was in their destruction, I could simply unleash an ultimate annihilation wave and reduce the world to ash in an instant. However that would only lead to them dying without realizing it, which would be boring. I need to teach the people of this world a lesson. So I will wipe them out with my own hands. Only that will quell my wrath! That said, killing every little mouse in this world one by one would be too much of a nuisance. As such, I will leave the extermination of the lessers of this world to you as my representatives. Yes! You shall be my envoys!"

"Hmm...so that's the situation. Can you do it?" Zakuro asked, turning to Haruto and Euphemia.

"As you command." Euphemia bowed her head. Haruto hurriedly followed suit. In a situation like this, he couldn't disobey even if he wanted to.

"Fear not. I shall grant you even greater power. I make only one demand of you: do not blindly kill en masse. Only take their lives once they are aware of their own sins. Though I suppose I cannot ask that you snap each of their necks individually."

The people of this world would have no idea that the UEG even existed. But on account of them living in the world in which she'd been trapped, they had been sentenced to death. It was a totally unreasonable state of affairs. But

she was a god, so there was nothing for Haruto to do but accept it. He may have been fated to end up in a situation like this from the moment Zakuro had saved him.

"Do you care which of us goes where?" Zakuro asked.

"Not at all! I shall begin by prioritizing those who seem like they will offer some level of resistance! The rest of you can simply wander around and slay whomever you come across." After saying that, the UEG vanished.

"Huh?"

"I guess she went to start killing."

"What should we do?"

"Exactly what she told us to. Wander around and kill whoever we find. Hmm. Are you reluctant to help?"

"To be honest, I'm a bit bewildered." Before coming to this world, Haruto had fought as a member of the bird beastkin. He had killed according to the orders from his tribe before. He didn't balk at the thought of killing. However, he couldn't help but feel reluctant to kill people who had done nothing wrong. If it was one or two people, he might have been able to swallow it, but there was no limit to these orders. He would have to keep killing until all life in this world was annihilated.

"Sorry for getting you wrapped up in this, but there's no backing out now. Lady UEG is very tolerant of her followers, but she has no mercy for those who disobey. However, she did just tell us to kill whoever we found. There is always the possibility you won't end up finding anyone."

"Umm..."

"Either way, take it easy. And just in case, our actions are just extensions of Lady UEG's will. Keep that in mind."

"May I ask something?"

"What is it?"

"What will happen to us once all life in this world is wiped out?"

"We'll be heading back to our own world, but you came from a different world, didn't you? Do you want to go back there?"

"If at all possible..."

"Then you should do what you can to get on Lady UEG's good side. In the end, she'll be the one who decides."

While they were talking, Euphemia had disappeared. Perhaps she had gone to carry out her orders. As if deciding he had said all that needed to be

said, Zakuro turned and began walking towards the exit as well.

What is this situation? How did things end up like this? Haruto cursed silently. His plan had been to use his classmates to make a place for himself in this world. But things had spun so far out of control that he was now part of a plan to exterminate all life in the world. *Do I have no other choice?*

The best he could hope for was that everything that happened in this world was just a dream. If he could make his way back to his own world, he might be able to convince himself of that. This place was foreign to him. He could always pretend that it had never even existed.

Haruto resolved himself to the task. He would work with the UEG to finish things as soon as possible.

Chapter 2 — Damn, I Screwed Up. I Accidentally Protected You. Looks Like I'm Losing My Edge

Yogiri's group returned to the forest near the port town. They had set up a rendezvous point with Ryouko and Carol there. In the dim forest, Yogiri Takatou, Tomochika Dannoura, the Enju robot (being controlled by Mokomoko), Luu (the girl born from the Philosopher's Stones), and her self-proclaimed daughter, Hiruko, were sitting down, resting against the numerous trees. Their objective was to head to the east, where they had heard there was another Sage. After Shigeto had summoned the Philosopher's Stones, there was a possibility that any Sage they encountered might not have one of their own anymore, but without any solid information, their best bet was to go take a look.

There were two methods they could use to reach the continent in the east. One was to take a ship, but since Yogiri and Tomochika were now wanted, most of the people in town were hostile towards them. That made booking passage on a ship rather difficult. Their next idea was to get a smaller boat and use Luu's telekinesis to propel them. Ryouko, Carol, and Risley had gone to the city to secure such a vessel and supplies for the journey.

Their second option was to use the teleportation devices set up by Lain. These devices were set up around the world, so it would allow them to reach the eastern continent instantly. But in order to use them, they needed Euphemia's knowledge. Finding her was up to Yogiri's group. They had been searching for her since she had gone missing.

"How are we supposed to know when Carol and Ryouko are coming back?!" Tomochika blurted out, suddenly realizing that they had decided to meet here but had never come up with a time.

"What, you guys never set up a way to reach each other?" Hiruko sighed.

"We didn't expect to get back here so quickly," Yogiri replied. "I had

hoped they'd have found the stuff and been waiting for us already."

"Why don't we send Hanakawa to look for them?"

"Why me?!"

"If we go into the town, we'll be attacked again, and Luu and Hiruko don't know them that well."

"No way! If I end up alone in this situation, some absurd event will whisk me away again! I have no intention of leaving Sir Takatou's side!"

"Not that being beside me will keep you safe."

"What?! Are we not friends?! You say that, but in the end, you'll end up saying something tsundere like, 'Damn, I screwed up. I accidentally protected you. Looks like I'm losing my edge,' and I will be safe the whole time, yes?"

"I guess I probably wouldn't leave you to die."

"Probably?"

"But you're pretty low on my priority list."

"For what reason?! Am I not the weakest member of our group?! Does that not deserve some level of protection?!"

"You really don't look like someone I want to protect, though."

"Doesn't your healing magic give you an edge?" Tomochika asked. "I'm pretty sure I'm the weakest one here." Though she was capable of fighting with her martial arts, she was the only one in the group that was an ordinary human with no special abilities.

"But still, Sir Takatou's ability to unconsciously react to killing intent can protect others as well, correct? Is it limited to only a single additional person?"

"Not necessarily."

"So why not add me to those who it would protect?!"

"It's not something that I do consciously. I think it's something like, if someone dying would inflict psychological damage on me, then attacking that person counts as an attack on me as well." However, he couldn't be sure that it would always keep Tomochika safe, so whenever it seemed like someone would attack her, he consciously acted in her defense.

"In short, seeing her die in front of you would inflict some sort of trauma on you?"

"That's right. If Dannoura died in front of me, it would be a pretty big shock. So she gets protected automatically while she's near me. Attacks against her count as attacks against me. Do you understand now?"

“Really, I wish to say that I understand less.”

“Sorry, but I don’t feel like I’d be moved all that much if you died in front of me. So you won’t be protected automatically.”

“Could you not turn your heart more towards that of a hero?! That’s it! You need to embrace a spirit of brotherhood! I think you also lack the necessary compassion to save someone in peril right in front of you!”

“It’s not anything unique to you. The same thing goes for Carol and the others. We’re just not that close.” Though he felt bad about it himself, Yogiri didn’t expect he’d feel much if Carol or Ryouko died in front of him. So if someone attacked them, he probably wouldn’t notice the killing intent and wouldn’t react automatically.

Of course, there was still merit to sticking with Yogiri, as those who attacked him died automatically. Even if his protection didn’t extend to everyone, sticking with him still increased their odds of survival.

“Honestly, the more I consider your power, the more unfair it seems!” Hanakawa continued to complain. “Being that invincible must leave life feeling rather tepid!”

“It’s always been like this for me, so I don’t know any different.” Yogiri had never felt like life was that simple. There were plenty of things he worried about specifically because he had his power.

“However, after this discussion, I am even more convinced that I cannot leave your side! Please don’t send me to look for them on my own!”

“Hmm. I could use electromagnetic waves to connect to their cell phones...but I would not know which phone to contact,” Mokomoko said.

“Then you’re no help either!”

“Hey, I dunno for sure, but you’re talking about meeting up with the girls we saw earlier, yeah? If they join us, there’ll be nine of us. Our group’s getting kind of big, isn’t it?” Hiruko suddenly jumped into the conversation.

“Similar to how party size is limited to six in some RPGs, if the group gets much larger, it will be difficult to manage,” Hanakawa agreed.

“Are you saying you can’t carry nine people at once? If it’s too many, we can leave Hanakawa behind.”

“Please refrain from speaking of abandoning me so flippantly!”

“Good joke. Adding a few more people makes no difference to me.”

“On that note, couldn’t you use your powers as a god to make us invisible or something? We could at least go look around town then.”

“Yeah, that would be a piece of cake.”

“So gods eat cake too, huh?”

“That’s what you’re worried about?! We eat as much as we want!”

Yogiri didn’t really know what it meant to be a god, but Hiruko at least seemed to have a physical body and so could eat.

“If you can do it, then please do.”

“Done.”

Yogiri looked around, but nothing seemed to have changed.

“You won’t notice a difference. But I’ve thinned our presence enough that most people won’t notice us.”

“You mean similar to Doraemon’s pebble hat?” Hanakawa asked. “So we could, for example, sneak into a young lady’s residence and be unnoticed no matter what we did—”

“Hiruko, if Hanakawa does anything weird, feel free to toss him out.”

“Leave it to me.”

“Heh heh...though I always speak of such erotic things, I always chicken out when such chances arise! That is the kind of pure boy I am! Rest assured, I will fail to accomplish anything when the time comes!”

Believing Hiruko’s claim that they were invisible, Yogiri’s group headed off to the city. Leaving the forest, they walked to the nearby port town. The town was surrounded by walls, so to enter, they’d have to pass through the gate. The last time they had tried, they had been accosted by the guards and had fled.

Yogiri felt uneasy as they approached the town. It felt totally different from the day before. It was terribly quiet. While there had been bustling crowds passing through the gate yesterday, there were no signs of anyone now. Even as they approached the gate, there were no guards.

“Something seems wrong,” Tomochika said, tilting her head.

“Waaaaaaaah! What happened?!” Hanakawa was the first to notice.

The inspection station beside the gate was covered in blood. Guards, merchants, and ordinary citizens lay sprawled around. It was clear at a glance that they were dead. Their heads were missing. The states of their necks made it clear they hadn’t been cleanly beheaded with a blade either. The heads had been bitten off or crushed somehow, and there was no sign of them anywhere.

“What happened?” Yogiri stepped past the bloody scene and into the city.

Things were no different within. Headless bodies were strewn about the street, turning it into a sea of blood.

"I don't think there's much point in checking further..." He changed his mind and went back. The silent city offered nothing but the smell of blood, so even without checking, he could be sure there was no one left alive.

"As far as I can see, none of them have their heads."

"Why?! What happened to Carol and the others?!"

"If they were here..." There wasn't much hope, but he couldn't say it out loud.

"Uhh, testing, testing! Were you calling us?"

"Carol?!" Tomochika looked around as Carol's voice suddenly greeted them, but she was nowhere to be seen.

"This is a special ninja technique, the Echo Jutsu!"

"What's that?"

"It's a little annoying for her to just leave it at 'it's ninjutsu,' isn't it?"

"I am not particularly well educated on the matter, but there was a ninjutsu technique by that name which involved acting as if one had turned traitor," Mokomoko explained. "However, this is likely referring to the auditory phenomenon, and is just a skill for leaving messages. I imagine the similar name is merely a coincidence."

"I set it up near the gate. And this is just a message, so I can't answer you back. By the time you guys get this message, I'll probably already be dead."

"No way..."

"Man, I've always wanted to say that!"

"Hey!" Tomochika shouted back.

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"To be honest, I have no idea if I'll still be alive when you hear this. I'm not planning to die or anything."

She didn't sound like she was in that much trouble, but with the aloof way Carol always acted, it was hard to tell.

"Just in case, I'll tell you about our job. We looked around town, but it was in a terrible state. It looks like getting a boat will be impossible."

The town was in a state of total chaos. Hundreds of thousands of refugees from the capital had swamped it. Though the port made the town prosperous enough, they were far over capacity. The streets had been packed, and those who couldn't make it inside were left to loiter outside.

"We didn't see anyone outside the city, did we?" Yogiri asked.

"Considering what happened to the people inside, I imagine the survivors fled immediately," Hanakawa guessed.

"Since it was totally impossible, we figured we'd just go back to the meeting spot and wait. But then Euphemia appeared."

"What?! Did we miss her?" Tomochika cried.

Yogiri was also a little surprised, but it wasn't impossible. If Euphemia had escaped from whatever was happening back in that cave, it wasn't hard to believe she'd try to rejoin Risley. Vampires had supernatural senses, so it wouldn't have been too hard for her to find the girl.

"But she hadn't come looking for us. She appeared all over the city at the same time."

"At the same time? What does that mean?"

"She probably inherited that ability from Lain. Lain could make clones of herself." Yogiri recalled Lain's strategy of making clones and throwing them at a city to attack.

"She said she was an envoy of the Ultimate Extermination God."

"Uhh..." Tomochika didn't know how to respond to that.

"Sounds rather...edgy? We never encountered a person like that."

"But that's the being who created the vampires, right? If they came up with the name 'Origin Blood,' that sounds like it fits..." Tomochika tried to find some way to come to terms with it.

"She said that everyone who lives in this world has some sort of original sin against this UEG."

"Oh, the edgelord levels are rising."

"And then she started smashing people's heads."

“Okay, perhaps it comes across as less edgy once they begin actually putting it into practice!” said Hanakawa.

“So Euphemia did all this?” Yogiri asked. With her power, smashing people’s heads would be no problem. But if all she was interested in was killing people, there should have been an easier way.

“I want to run away, but she’s so much stronger than we are that I’m not confident we can make it out. Risley wants to talk with her, but we’re not sure we want to die with her, so we might split up. So see you later. If we survive, I’m sure we’ll meet sooner or later.”

Carol’s message came to an end, and silence returned.

“So, uhh...where did this UEG person come from?”

“Judging from the context, maybe it was that huge monster that attacked the capital?”

Carol’s group had met a man named Zakuro in the underground ruins, who had told them the enormous monster was a god. From the information they had at the moment, it was the only thing that seemed a likely candidate for this UEG. Of course, it was a name that had just appeared out of nowhere, so there was no real way for them to pin down who it was.

“If that’s true, you normally wouldn’t call yourself something like the ‘Ultimate Extermination God,’ right?”

“Well...” Hanakawa said, “I am sure gods have all sorts of tastes. It is not so hard to believe their naming senses might be very different from ours...”

“Malnarilna seemed pretty out there too, didn’t they?”

Yogiri remembered Kouryu. Gods in general seemed to be pretty ridiculous, so accepting such a weird name didn’t seem all that bizarre.

“So, what now?”

“There’s nothing left for us to do here. I guess we should move on.”

It was hard to believe there was anything to be gained from investigating the city. It wasn’t like they weren’t curious about what had happened, but it was already over and had nothing to do with them.

They decided to head to the eastern continent as a group of six.

Chapter 3 — After Going Through All the Trouble of Setting Up This Ritual, Do You Not Intend to Use It?

After returning to the Axis Church, the Divine King began to investigate Yogiri Takatou. He was a being capable of slaying a Dark God. She couldn't simply be glad that he had brought peace to their world. Making use of believers all across the world, she collected information. Using the treasures left behind by the High Wizard Eglacia, she gathered facts about events that had happened everywhere.

As a result, she understood that Yogiri was an unparalleled threat to their world. As a person, he at first seemed benign. But the power he wielded was the definition of evil and posed an ever-present danger. Looking at the situation so far, his actions had been far from wicked, but he resisted whenever someone attacked him. The vast majority of his assailants were slain, but he paid no mind to the effects his power had on the world around him.

No matter how important his opponent was to the world, or how many unrelated third parties would die as a result, he didn't hesitate in the least. Even if it meant the end of the world, he always prioritized himself and his companions. In fact, not only the High Wizard Eglacia himself, but a fair percentage of the world's entire population lay dead at his hands.

She had no idea what had led to those results, but such were the facts. When Eglacia had attacked Yogiri in the tower, he'd been slain. When a mysterious individual had attacked Yogiri aboard a cruise ship, countless people, livestock, wild animals, insects, and even plants had died. Anyone he wished to kill would die. If there was a chance Yogiri would die, the potential cause would die instead. There were even cases where people who seemed to have nothing to do with him had died. From the information she had gathered, that was the only conclusion she could draw.

She doubted he possessed any malicious intent of his own. He was only protecting himself, so from his perspective, what he was doing was fair. However, permitting him to continue in this way would spell the end of their world. Whether he was good or evil himself was irrelevant. As the figurehead of the dominant religion, she couldn't leave the fate of their world resting on the whims of a single boy.

But what could she do about it?

She considered refraining from intervening at all. There was a chance he would return to his own world eventually. There was also the possibility of him settling down and adopting a quiet life somewhere. She could even potentially convince him to stop using his powers just by talking things through with him.

But she couldn't risk betting on any such shaky possibilities. If she did nothing, then at any moment the entire population of the world could be wiped out without warning. She couldn't ignore that possibility. She needed some way to neutralize his power.

Though she decided on that quickly, she just as soon gave up on trying to kill him. If she so much as made an attempt, she'd be killed immediately. Of course, she wasn't that attached to life. If she thought sacrificing herself would put an end to Yogiri, she would gladly do so. But deciding to kill him would lead to a pointless death, so it would be little more than committing suicide. Whether they were gods or superbeings from beyond the world that exceeded human understanding, anyone who sought to harm Yogiri Takatou died. She had learned that from her investigation.

The Axis Church was the largest religious organization in the world. Though she could freely make use of its believers, she wasn't on the level of a god. There were countless examples of those who had failed to kill him before her. There was no point in adding her name to the list. So she needed to find a way to neutralize his power without that power being turned against her.

She considered trying to lock him away using a similar method that had been used to neutralize the Dark Gods. She could trap him in a space where time barely moved at all. The most important part would be to seal him inside without his knowledge. The seal itself wouldn't harm Yogiri. From the inside, he wouldn't even recognize the flow of time changing. For him, nothing would change at all. That might be sufficient to neutralize him

without being killed in turn.

That was what the Divine King decided.

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The construction of the towers began immediately. They were built near a port town in the Kingdom of Brea. Previously, Yogiri had encountered a battle between the heroes and a Demon Lord in the area. This location had been chosen due to the ease with which they could transport the necessary materials there.

Currently, ten towers were being built, and the Divine King was standing at the heart of the circle they drew. The towers seemed like they were made of little more than paper. Only their frameworks had been built so far, their walls having barely begun construction. In order to perform the ritual, the towers needed to be a certain height, so construction had been rushed to accomplish that. Of course, the towers would have barely any durability in that state, so they would need to be reinforced later. And in the end, they would erect barriers to hide the towers from the outside world.

It was a far larger scale than anything that had been used against the Dark Gods, but she wanted as much room for error as possible. In their battle against the previous Dark God, they had lacked both time, material, and personnel. She had barely managed to pin him down by sacrificing herself, sealing both of them away. The mechanisms in the tower in the canyon were far from perfect. The threat posed by Yogiri Takatou was unmistakable, but it wasn't particularly urgent. They could take the time needed to make the proper preparations before confronting him.

Believers filed into the towers. They would spend the rest of their short lives inside. The believers would have their arms and legs removed and be plugged directly into the tower. This was the most efficient method. For now, what they needed most was numbers, so they were crammed into narrow spaces. In order to make more of them fit into a tighter space, they needed to remove unnecessary body parts. Feeding them all individually would be inefficient, so tubes and piping were connected to them to both supply nutrients and extract magical energy to power the seal's core.

This wasn't the ordinary method that the Divine King would choose. She was well aware of how inhumane this was. But it was to save hundreds of

millions of lives. A sacrifice of tens of thousands was unfortunate but necessary.

If Eglacia were alive, he may have found a more efficient way of doing this...

The Divine King and the Swordmasters had been created by Eglacia to stand in for the useless gods of this world. He had been a genius capable of manipulating the underlying system of the world itself, so he might have come up with some sort of brilliance that could avoid this, but there was no point lamenting his loss now. All they could do was make the best of the knowledge he had left behind.

Luckily, the Divine King was familiar with this particular kind of seal, so if she was given sufficient time to prepare, she was confident she could do it well. Establishing the seal would require ten thousand believers, and maintaining it would require another thousand every year. Half-demons would be more efficient as fuel, but collecting them now would take too much time. They could replace the humans with half-demons at a later date, but for now, activating the seal was the highest priority. She had no choice but to use the regular believers she had on hand.

At present, Yogiri had crossed the sea and was in the Empire of Ent, a small island in the east. The huge scale of the construction had been so that they could seal him away where he was. Of course, it would have been best if he had been nearby, but Yogiri was always on the move. By the time they finished the construction around him, he would have moved on to a new area. As such, she had no choice but to build it in such a way that it could trap him wherever he was.

“Construction of Tower E has been completed,” one of her subordinates reported.

Though she had been gone for centuries, upon her return, she regained control of the Axis Church and successfully restructured it. Her power to instill a deep, sincere adoration for her in the believers had made it easy enough. While that may have been far from what one would hope for from a founder of a religious institution, that was the power of the system of the Axis Church built by Eglacia.

“Thank you. Please continue your work.”

The believers didn’t have the slightest doubts about their work. They had a blind faith in the words the Divine King spoke. They honestly believed that

they were working to save the world and that sacrifices would be necessary.

The Divine King couldn't help but pity them. If she had never returned, they never would have been seized by such a religious fervor. However, it was true that this ritual was necessary to protect the world, so she could hardly stop now. They needed to finish the trap and neutralize the unprecedented threat that Yogiri Takatou posed at any cost.

The Divine King looked down at the hole in front of her. It was about ten meters across. It was ringed with white stone, and a light shone in its depth. The hole itself was the altar, the light within the magical energy necessary for the ritual. Their current objective was to fill the altar with sufficient energy, but first they needed to finish the construction of that central area.

The Divine King reached out a hand, prompting a stream of light to reach up out of the hole. As she moved her arm and fingers, the light drew an intricate pattern in the air. The pattern took the form of an enormous sphere. That would serve as the core of the seal when it was activated. She could leave the construction of the towers and the arranging of the believers to others, but she needed to do this part herself.

"Oh, how impressive. You have truly constructed it well. Your timing leaves a little to be desired, though. Even if you thought to seal me away again, do you not think this method is far too slow? Though that leads me to question how you knew I was revived in the first place. Was there a prophecy or some such thing?"

The Divine King stopped her work and turned. A young girl in a simple white robe stood behind her.

"Who are you?" Countless believers were in position around her hard at work. Just in case, they had kept up a strict guard. There was no way an ordinary person could get this far undetected.

"How unusual. Or perhaps my image is not so well known, so I should expect you not to recognize me? No matter. I am a god. You may call me UEG, the Ultimate Extermination God."

Though she claimed to be a god, she seemed like nothing more than a human girl. But the Divine King was well aware that looks and ability often conflicted. Just because she felt little threat from the girl didn't mean she could let her guard down. She made sure to keep her guard up.

"You seem quite gloomy, though. Your eyes look totally lifeless. Not that it is of any concern to me."

The Divine King felt a little irritated. The damage Yogiri was inflicting was growing worse by the day. With his victims in mind, she could hardly hope to be cheerful and couldn't relax for a moment.

"So? Why are you here?" the Divine King asked.

"Hmm. You really are quite slow. I am the Ultimate Extermination God. Naturally that means I am here to exterminate you."

"I see." The Divine King hesitated. Though this was a suspicious person who had appeared out of nowhere, she still appeared to be a young, cute girl. Anyone would hesitate to cut someone like that down without question. But as she sensed the bloodlust beginning to emanate from her, the Divine King's hesitation vanished.

Though she was the figurehead of a religious organization, her true nature was that of a warrior. If it came to a fight, she would hold nothing back, even against a girl like this. She drew her sword.

"What use have you for a sword? After going through all the trouble of setting up this ritual, do you not intend to use it?"

"Unfortunately, it is still under construction." And of course, the seal was being built for Yogiri. There was no way she'd use it on some random person like this.

"Hmm. My apologies, but I have no desire to sit around and wait for its completion."

Even if the girl had said she would wait, the Divine King couldn't let someone go free after learning about the trap. In order to keep the world safe, she needed to eliminate as many uncertainties as possible. She swung her sword down. The fact she was clearly out of range made no difference. Extending the range of her swing was no challenge for her.

"Oh? That looks like a type of Holy Sword. You seem to be well equipped. You may even be able to harm me with such a weapon," the UEG said, her expression relaxing as the blade failed to reach her. She had pulled her own sword out from somewhere, blocking the strike. "Simply taking your life would be a feat of no particular challenge, but it would be boring. Instead, let us have a contest of arms."

The Divine King hadn't held anything back. She had unleashed the most powerful attack she could in her current state, an attack that would have annihilated any lesser foe. But it seemed her opponent wasn't so weak.

I would like to avoid excessive fighting here, if possible.

Her primary objective was to finish the trap ritual. If they fought here and destroyed the altar or the towers, all their effort would have been for nothing. But if she held anything back, the damage would only be worse. She would need to eliminate the UEG as fast as possible, careful to avoid as much collateral damage as she could.

The Divine King released the seal on her own powers.

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Chapter 4 — Huh? You Want Me to Fight?! But I Don't Have Any Powers Anymore!

At this level, the Divine King couldn't beat the UEG. Even so, she couldn't use her full power right away. If she fought at full strength, the place would turn into a wasteland like the canyon. There was no way the seal they were constructing would survive.

On top of that, if she released her power all at once, her body wouldn't survive. She needed to increase her power in stages to acclimate herself to each new level.

She began by removing her first seal. The magic and life energy of the believers around her began to flow into her. Her body screamed in protest at the sudden rush of power. At this level, she would only take enough energy to make her followers feel a little tired.

With a roar, she swung her blade down. The shock wave unleashed from the tip of her sword cleaved through the earth towards the UEG, who responded by swinging her own sword up in a backhand grip. The two shock waves struck each other, dissipating harmlessly.

"This is the first time I have fought with a sword in quite a while. I was hoping to engage in some actual swordplay," the UEG said, spinning the sword in her hand with a somewhat unsatisfied expression. She didn't seem the least bit concerned by the Divine King's attack. "However, it appears you have no such inclination. I suppose I will have to start us off myself!"

In the blink of an eye, the UEG closed the distance between them. The Divine King managed to bring her blade up just in time to block a fatal blow.

The Divine King cried out as the shock of the impact shot through her arms. The UEG continued to push on her weapon, but her opponent didn't retreat a step.

"Hmm. I expected you to fold to a single blow, but you seem sturdier than

I anticipated. I am impressed you can take a strike from a sword I created."

The Divine King delivered a kick to the UEG's stomach. It felt just like kicking any other girl of her stature. Her stomach was soft, showing no signs of muscle. In an ordinary girl her size, the blow would have ruptured her organs and snapped her spine, but the UEG was only knocked back a few steps, showing no hint of injury.

"I see, I see. So that is how you deal with our blades being locked. We cannot simply push on each other forever, so you chose to take some distance." As her words suggested, the UEG was a novice when it came to swordplay. She was relying purely on force as she swung her sword around. "Hm. You seem to think rather poorly of my skills. That is something I cannot help. I have very few opportunities to fight with a sword like this."

The Divine King saw a faint opening, the smallest possibility of victory. The UEG's blinding speed and overwhelming strength were a serious threat, but they weren't enough to overwhelm her. If she could reach a higher level of power, she should be able to win.

This time, the Divine King stepped forward. If she waited for her body to adjust to her new power level, she might become overwhelmed. Her chances were better if she kept the pressure on her opponent.

"Oh, a proper sword fight, then! Ah! You seem! Rather! Skilled!"

The Divine King unleashed a flurry of blows, leaving no space for the UEG to breathe, putting the god on the defensive. Though the newcomer seemed capable of fending off the strikes, she clearly had no skill in swordsmanship and therefore no way of dealing with the unending stream of blows.

I can do this!

If the Divine King could keep the pressure on, the opening seal on her powers would continue to feed her with more strength. So she kept up her patient assault. Rather than seeking vital spots to attack, she overwhelmed the UEG with her sheer number of strikes.

She brought her sword down. The UEG blocked it, but the impact sent a tremor through the earth beneath them. Downward slashes tore through the earth, while sideways sweeps unleashed gales of wind. The longer they fought, the greater the Divine King's power grew, each swing of her weapon displaying more supernatural strength than the last.

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But as the fight continued, the situation remained the same. As her body grew accustomed to her new power, the Divine King's seal released more and more for her to use. Most of the believers engaged in the construction of the towers around them had collapsed—she was wringing as much magical energy from them as possible. The range of her power was expanding, drawing from the nearby villages now as well.

But she couldn't deliver a finishing blow. Judging from the abilities the UEG had shown at the start, the Divine King should have won by now. The only explanation was that as she grew stronger, so did the UEG.

"Dammit!" she cursed as the UEG deflected a powerful slash into a nearby tower, pulverizing it. Her strength was already enough to manage such a feat, yet there was still no gap between her and her opponent. As the tower storing the concentrated power of her believers crumbled, her will wavered. The UEG took the opportunity to disengage, but the Divine King made no effort to chase her. There was no point in continuing this way.

"I made such an effort to avoid damaging the seal you were constructing here too. How careless of you to destroy it yourself," said the UEG.

"What exactly is your plan?"

There was no point in asking the question in the middle of a fight. But surprisingly, the UEG answered.

"As you have guessed, I am incredibly powerful. But as a god, a contest against a human could hardly be called a fight. Therefore, I suppressed my own power to make the match more even, but you seem to be creeping ever closer to the level of a god yourself. There would be no value in fighting an opponent that has no method of resisting, though. So I have been waiting to see how you fight back. Do you not intend to use this massive contraption?"

Five of the towers were more or less complete. One had been destroyed, but the other four would be able to function. Of course, they were hardly in peak condition. Her team hadn't gathered that many believers to use as power sources, and the circuits designed to combine and amplify their power were less than half finished.

With a close enough target, they might have still had an effect. It was getting to the point where she couldn't afford to save the trap for Yogiri. If she held out and ended up dying, she wouldn't be able to do anything about him either. It would take considerable time to set up another trap, but there seemed no other option.

“Knights of the Divine King! Manifest in accordance with my summons!” Holding her sword to the sky, the Divine King called out and light filled the air around her. Then it faded, revealing dozens of figures. Knights of the Divine King, led by the Swordmaster to guard the Divine King herself.

“Huh? Uhh...what’s going on here?” The first to lift his voice in confusion was Lynel, a man who had passed the trial to become a Knight not long before.

“We already explained this, didn’t we? We’re Knights of the Divine King now. If she summons us, we have to go!” Frederica explained to him. She, too, had become a Knight during the events in the Garula Canyon.

“We have to go...but like this?! She just teleports us?! Teleporting so many people from so many places sounds crazy...”

The Knights weren’t an organization with a fixed base. They each acted independently, spread out across the world.

“She’s the Divine King! Of course she can do that!”

In spite of Frederica’s words, such an ability wasn’t actually something that could be taken for granted. Teleporting people across vast distances required enormous power. In order to accomplish it, a fair number of her believers’ lives had been extinguished. The Divine King’s miraculous powers were founded on the sacrifices of her followers.

“Divine King, I understand you would only summon us like this in an emergency. What is the situation?” Amidst the confusion, the Swordmaster, Rick, stepped forward to act as their representative.

The Divine King pointed at the UEG. “That girl is an enemy of humanity. She must be defeated at all costs. I shall begin preparations to seal her away. I need you all to buy time for me.”

Rick hesitated for a moment, which was natural. Their enemy looked like nothing but a cute young girl. But the moment he noticed the destroyed tower, his hesitation vanished.

“I hardly feel such a spectacle is necessary. I could have just waited for all of you. But no matter. If you are going to such lengths to prepare entertainment for me, I will not put it to waste.”

It was possible the UEG would have waited, just as she said. She had made no move to interrupt when the Divine King had stopped to summon her Knights. But there was no way they could trust such an enigmatic being.

“What? Huh? You want me to fight?! But I don’t have any powers

anymore! The best I can say is that my terrible luck has gotten a little better recently!"

"Pull yourself together, Lynel," Frederica scolded him. "You're a Knight now."

"Umm, shouldn't Takatou and Dannoura be here? They were Knights too, but I don't see them anywhere."

"Who knows? Maybe they were too far away, or they're busy."

If the Divine King were capable of summoning Yogiri, she wouldn't have hesitated. But since the two teens were not followers of the Axis Church, her power couldn't affect them. If Yogiri had been one of her followers, she could have already manipulated or killed him as she saw fit. There wouldn't have been any need to construct the elaborate ritual in the first place.

"You don't have to do anything, Lynel. Please find a place to hide," Rick said before lunging forward to engage the UEG. The other Knights grasped the situation instantly, following Rick at once.

"Umm...I don't know how I feel about you having no expectations of me at all, though I guess I can't really do anything here..."

Ignoring Lynel's muttering, the Divine King left the situation in the hands of the Swordmaster and headed to the altar.

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Yogiri's group was floating through the air towards the continent in the east. Hiruko was at the front, with Yogiri, Tomochika, Mokomoko, Hanakawa, and Luu behind her. Though they were floating through the air, they felt strangely stable, enough for Yogiri to lie back using his hands as a pillow. Tomochika was beside him, in a seated position with her legs stretched out in front of her.

"Hey, why are you covering your legs now?" Yogiri asked, curious as to why she had started to wear leggings. Though Tomochika frequently changed outfits, this was the first time her legs hadn't been totally visible.

"I wasn't worried about it before, but I don't really want people staring at me."

Yogiri could understand that. If they were going to be flying around like this regularly, her other outfits bore the risk of accidentally flashing her underwear to the people below them.

“Why are you looking at me all of a sudden?!” Hanakawa cried. “Sir Takatou seems just as likely to peek in situations like this!”

“I’m not going to be upset if I happen to see something, but I’m not going to go out of my way to look.”

“I am exactly the same! I have fully learned that if I overstep my bounds, something terrible could happen to me! If I thought I might see something, I would look away, and if I saw something by accident, I would pretend I didn’t! That is how kind-hearted I am!”

“Either way, it feels gross. From either of you!”

“I see. That’s too bad. I really liked your thighs.”

“O-Oh... Well, maybe when we’re not flying around so much, I’ll change again.”

As they talked, they shot out over the ocean. There didn’t seem to be any signs of them being accosted from the sky. With Hiruko keeping them hidden, it was possible they hadn’t been noticed.

“If this were an RPG, it would feel like we were closing in on the end, would it not?” Hanakawa commented. “Moving along at high speed like this with no regard for the terrain and no other encounters detracts from the adventurous atmosphere. All that is left is to head directly for the last boss, I suppose.”

Of course, they had no idea how long Hiruko would cooperate with them. Relying too much on her could end up being a liability.

“No, if it were me, I would avoid going to the last boss if I could fly like this,” Yogiri replied. “This is when I’d start checking all the places surrounded by mountains that I couldn’t reach before. That’s where you’re going to find the best equipment for the boss fight, right?”

“But there’s always a chance there’s a whole other world and that you aren’t actually at the end of the game, isn’t there?” Tomochika added.

“I really like games that do that. It feels like I’m getting a lot out of them for my money.”

“Really? Don’t you get frustrated thinking you’ve finished the game but it keeps going?”

“You have to keep playing whether you like it or not at that point, don’t you?” said Yogiri.

“When it happens, it feels like I’m being conned somehow...but at the same time like not finishing the game is a waste, so I often keep going.”

“In any case,” Hanakawa interjected, looking up at the sky, “though it may not end up being another world, there are still some mysterious locations here that we have yet to explore.”

Peeking out from behind the clouds were numerous rock formations. When they had first arrived, those floating islands had been proof they were in a new world, but now they were so common as to be barely noticed.

“I have heard there is an entire continent floating in the sky,” he continued, “though it is of course hard to discern from the surface.”

“It doesn’t seem totally unbelievable. Those fake angels come from the sky, after all.” Tomochika looked up. If they weren’t just appearing out of thin air, there had to be *some* place they were coming from.

“I don’t know what you guys are gabbing about, but look at that.” Hiruko pointed.

Yogiri looked ahead. A large white object was floating on the surface of the ocean. Beyond it, they could see something that looked like land, but a thick haze shrouded it, making it impossible to see clearly. They could only tell that it was too large to be an island.

“Is that a ship? Or wait, a city?” Tomochika asked, putting her fantastic eyesight to good use.

As they got closer, Yogiri could also see the same thing. It looked more like an enormous floating city than a ship. On the upper level was an array of uniform buildings. Yogiri knew of the Mega-Float airport built over the water in Tokyo Bay, but that was still connected to land. This city was floating in the middle of the ocean.

“What should we do?” Hanakawa asked. “It seems likely some sort of event will trigger if we visit.”

“I can’t say I’m not curious, but I doubt we’ll find a Sage there, so we should go straight ahead to the continent.” Yogiri answered.

“Then we’re ignoring it,” Hiruko stated, taking them over the city and towards land, where the haze began to grow thicker. It soon became a dense fog, obstructing all view of their surroundings.

“Are we okay like this? It seems a situation like this is intended to lead us astray,” Hanakawa suggested.

“Can’t we use Enju’s sensors to tell if we’re still going straight?” asked Tomochika.

“Her abilities are not that powerful, so I feel you should avoid relying on

them too much, but we do seem to be heading in a straight line—”

Mokomoko’s voice was cut off as a tremor shook the group. After a series of surprised shouts, they looked at Hiruko to see what had happened and found her toppled over.

“What’s wrong?” Luu asked, worried.

“We ran into something! Huh? What the heck?!” Hiruko attempted to reach out with her hands, but stopped. Something was pushing her back. “An invisible wall? Are you serious?! Is there a barrier here?!”

“Hah! After all that posturing, you get defeated by a simple barrier?”

“Don’t make me come over there!”

“Hanakawa really likes to stir things up in situations like this, huh?” Tomochika snapped.

“This does appear to be the edge of the world, does it not?” said Hanakawa.

“Huh? You mean the fog?”

“You see similar things in video games from time to time. In order to hide the fact that the world ends there, they cover it in fog!”

“It feels a lot better than suddenly hitting an invisible wall, so I like that way of doing it,” Yogiri replied.

“Who cares about video games right now?!” cried Tomochika.

Even if the world did have edges, one was unlikely to be here. There was supposed to be a continent to the east of them.

Yogiri walked up to Hiruko where she was floating in the air and stretched out a hand. He was able to reach farther than she could, finding no obstacle at all.

“Let me warn you, my power doesn’t work past here. If you waltz on ahead, you’ll drop like a rock.”

“Does this barrier only block Hiruko? Can you guys try as well?”

The rest of them tested it out. Hiruko, Luu, Mokomoko, and Hanakawa couldn’t pass the invisible wall, but Yogiri and Tomochika had no trouble moving through it.

“It seems to block particular types of beings, or those of a certain power level, I guess?”

“How does Takatou qualify as an ordinary person here?!” Tomochika cried.

“Hiruko, can you do something about this?” asked Yogiri.

“Nope. I gotta follow the rules that are set up.”

A voice called out to them, though there was no visible source. *“Hello! My apologies, but I cannot allow you to proceed any farther. If you came here by mistake, please turn back now. If you have some business in Belm, I am sure you saw the floating city, so please go inquire there.”*

“Sounds suspicious to me,” said Tomochika.

“But we don’t really have a choice, do we?”

“It feels like a forced event. Are we yet again to be wrapped up in some sort of incident?!” asked Hanakawa.

“That seems to be the way things go for us...” Thinking back on their journey so far, Tomochika’s eyes grew distant.

“If you don’t want to go, we can leave you behind, Hanakawa.”

“Only a demon would leave me here! Of course I will accompany you!”

“I’m going too!” shouted Luu.

“Not like they can mess with us too much if a god like me is around,” Hiruko added.

They decided to do as they were asked and head to the floating city.

Chapter 5 — So This Is Something like a Draft, Then?

Yogiri's group turned back. The fog quickly lifted, revealing the gentle ocean once more. It took no time at all for them to reach the floating city.

"In the middle of the city is a central tower. There is a place there for you to land on the roof."

The "island" was shaped like a circle, and in its center was a conspicuously large tower. They landed on top of it.

"I presume you wish to visit the Belm mainland?"

"Yeah. Do we need to do something special for that?" Yogiri wondered if they would need some sort of visa to get in, though of course they had nothing of the sort.

"Please do not worry. As long as you agree to certain terms, you will be permitted entry. First, I would like to discuss those terms with you."

"Okay. What should we do?"

"Please go directly ahead."

Following the guidance of the voice, they headed into the tower and found a descending staircase.

"Is this safe?" Tomochika asked. "It feels really off to me."

"We can't turn around after coming this far," Yogiri told her. While he could understand her caution, if they stopped here, they wouldn't be able to make it to the mainland, and that would cut off their last lead for Philosopher's Stones. They had no choice but to hear the voice out first.

As they started to descend the stairs, Yogiri turned around. "This makes it look like I'm the leader. Do you guys mind if I go first?"

"Why not? Whether you look the part or not, you *are* the leader, aren't you? You're the guy who's been telling us what our objectives are this whole time. We're the ones who chose to go with you," Hiruko answered.

"Okay, we'll leave it at that, then."

With Yogiri at the head, they descended the stairs. After one floor, they

made it to a dimly lit room. The weak lights in the ceiling made it difficult to gauge how large the chamber actually was.

"In front of you should be some chairs. Please have a seat."

There were two long tables. Each had three chairs in front of them. Yogiri, Tomochika, and Enju sat at one table, while the other three took the second. As they sat, a dull purple light flickered on in front of them, forming the image of a stylized eye.

"Hello. My name is Potenti, representative of the Belm Continental Conference."

The voice now seemed to be coming from the eye, making it a little easier to converse. Speaking with a voice with no obvious source was a bit unsettling.

"First of all, I want to ask if there are any Sages on the mainland," Yogiri said. That was the main thing he wanted to know. If there were no Sages, there was no point in going there in the first place.

"There is one. Belm is under the jurisdiction of Sage Van."

"Do you know where he is?"

"No clue. He is rarely seen, so it is difficult to pin him down. I am sure he is somewhere on the mainland, though."

"What is this floating city?"

"This is a bridge, so to speak, to reach the Belm mainland. Anyone who wishes to enter Belm must pass through here. This is also where trade with other nations occurs."

"So, what are the terms we have to agree to?"

"Before I go over the terms, please allow me to give you a brief explanation of the situation on the continent. The Belm mainland is shaped much like a long rectangle, each of its four corners ruled by a different nation."

"There are only four countries on the entire continent?" Tomochika asked. If there had been many more, searching through them may have ended up being a pain, so Yogiri was glad.

"These four nations are members of the Belm Continental Conference. To be blunt, the others don't matter."

"So much for the formalities." Tomochika sighed. Though they had gone through the trouble of setting up such a formal atmosphere, it seemed Potenti wasn't that concerned about putting on airs.

"Returning to the matter at hand, the continent is always in a state of war. I believe it is important for you to know that foreigners are generally killed on sight."

"And now I'm starting to change my mind about wanting to go there!"

"So it's survival of the fittest again, right?" Yogiri asked. "That's basically the same as the rest of this world." Being attacked out of the blue was nothing new for them.

"The top left of Belm is the nation of Momurus. The top right is Himeln. The bottom left is the Suudoria Academy. The bottom right is the Slow Life League."

"Some of those don't sound like countries..."

"In order to gain access to the mainland, you will need to associate yourself with one of these four factions."

"If we do, we won't be blocked from leaving again, will we?" Yogiri asked just in case. He didn't mind joining one of the factions if he could freely leave once they had finished their business.

"That would be up to the factions in question. You will be required to abide by the laws and customs of whichever nation you join."

"Then we'd like to join whoever has the most relaxed laws, I guess."

"Unfortunately, which nation you join is not up to you. If you wish to enter the mainland, we will decide your faction ourselves."

"Why?!"

"In order to keep the fighting strength of each individual nation balanced."

"I see. So this is something like a draft, then?" Hanakawa said.

"Correct. Please think of it as such. Once you have entered, you will have to do as I instruct, so this is your last chance to change your mind. What will it be?" the floating eye finished, waiting silently for their response.

Hiruko spoke first. "This sounds kinda fishy, no? Like a contract you can't read 'til you've already signed it."

"But Tomochika and I will be doing it. We don't have any other way in," Yogiri declared. Judging from the discussion so far, the whole thing was going to be a pain. If Hanakawa, Hiruko, and Luu weren't interested, they'd have to go their separate ways.

"While it seems absurdly suspicious, I have already made up my mind to follow you," Hanakawa announced. "Although, are you sure you can make

that decision without asking Tomochika's opinion?"

"We're kind of stuck together at this point," Tomochika answered. "There's no need to discuss it."

"I'll be sticking with Ma," Hiruko told them.

"I'm going with daddy!" cried Luu.

"Then I guess we're all going in."

As Yogiri answered for the group, four eyes appeared in the darkness, two above and two below the first.

"If you would like to enter, may I please have your names?"

As they each gave their names, the four new eyes flickered.

"Slow Life League, Hiruko."

"Suudoria Academy, Daimon Hanakawa."

"Himeln, Luu."

"Momurus, Enju."

Each echoed a name back in turn. Apparently, they had already made their decision.

"Hold on a sec! We're being split up?! I'm not leaving Ma!"

"In order to keep the teams balanced, you cannot be allowed to all join the same nation."

"What are you, stupid?! If that's how it is—" As Hiruko started to get riled up, she suddenly vanished. In short order, Hanakawa, Luu, and Enju followed suit.

"Huh?" Tomochika stared at the now empty space, bewildered. They must have been teleported to their new countries.

Yogiri calmly came to the same conclusion, but it was odd that he and Tomochika's names hadn't been called.

"Hey, what about us? You said we have to join one of the nations to enter the mainland, right?"

"Due to your lack of combat ability, you will not be recruited by any nation. However, since your entry will not influence the balance of power, you are permitted to enter as you wish."

"Oh, that's fine, then." Getting separated from Tomochika would have been the worst-case scenario, but it seemed they had managed to avoid it. He had no complaints about the situation.

"Hold on a second! We just got separated from our friends! Could you be a bit more flustered?!"

“What’s the problem? Hiruko and Luu are gods, so they should be able to manage.”

“What about Hanakawa?”

“Uhh...he’s level ninety-nine, isn’t he?”

“Being level ninety-nine as a human doesn’t mean much in this world!”

“I get the feeling he’ll be just fine.”

“Then what about Mokobot? She may be a robot, but she’s not that strong, is she?” Designed after Enju, the robot had abilities far surpassing that of a human. But compared to the monsters of this world, it wasn’t particularly strong at all.

Ah, well. I am still here.

“Oh! I forgot, Mokomoko is actually just an evil spirit!”

A guardian *spirit!*

“It’s been a while since I’ve seen you in that form,” Yogiri said. Mokomoko was floating beside Tomochika in her true ghostly form. “So they just sent the Enju robot off on its own?”

Indeed. After all, I cannot exist independently of Tomochika. Forcibly teleporting me away would not work.

“You can control Enju from a distance, right? Do you know where she went?”

She is beyond my range. If we made it closer, I could perhaps get a response from her, but as it stands, there is nothing I can do.

“What should we do now?” Yogiri asked. The four eyes had vanished. They must have been satisfied after spiriting away their new recruits.

“Please walk to Belm.”

“That’s ridiculous!” cried Tomochika.

“As people without noticeable fighting power, we cannot waste precious resources teleporting you.”

“We don’t have to swim, right?” Yogiri asked.

“Correct. There is a path leading from the city to the mainland.”

“Where is it, exactly?”

“Please return to the rooftop. We will prepare the path for you there.”

The last eye vanished, and the lights in the room turned on. Now that they could see properly, it looked like an ordinary, empty room. There was nothing in it but the chairs and desks they had been using and the staircase leading back up.

“This ended up going in a way I didn’t expect...” Tomochika sighed. “Are we going to be okay like this? We’re wanted by the Malnarilna sect. Getting information on our own might be kind of tricky.”

“I’m sure we’ll figure it out once we get to the mainland. Hiruko is going to look for Luu, and Luu said she wanted to stick with me, so I’m sure they’ll come find us after that.”

“What about Hanakawa?”

“I think he can take care of himself.”

“Hanakawa... Survive, Hanakawa!” Tomochika said, staring into empty space, but it didn’t seem to Yogiri like she was actually very worried.

The two of them made their way back up the stairs. On the roof was a large device that looked like a floodlight, shining a pale lens towards the east.

“Is this the path you were talking about?”

“Yes. Please walk through the light.”

“What? Are you sure?”

“I remember seeing a secret tool like this in a cartoon once,” Yogiri said as he stepped forward. Once he was inside, it was like a tunnel, forming solid ground beneath his feet.

“Oh, it looks like it’ll be okay.” Tomochika hesitantly followed him in, looking around.

“Okay, let’s go.”

They began walking. It was a bit unnerving once they stepped out into open air, but they managed the journey without falling. They continued on in this way for a while: from above the floating city to over the open ocean, and from the open ocean into the fog. Just as they began to worry about how long it would take them to get there, they passed through to the other side.

“I was worried we’d be stuck in that fog forever...” Tomochika muttered.

“Looks like we found land.”

A huge expanse of land greeted them. The light tunnel continued forward into one of the cliffs on its edge. That seemed to be their destination.

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The stony cliffs immediately gave way to gently sloping grasslands. A stone road cut its way through the open fields.

“Looks...pretty normal?” Tomochika said.

“Yeah, no jungle or wasteland or anything.” Yogiri had prepared himself for the worst, so the somewhat peaceful scenery was a relief.

Once they reached the top of the cliffs, the tunnel of light vanished. There didn’t seem to be a way for them to go back.

“I guess if we follow the road, we’ll eventually end up in a city?”

“Then let’s start by following the—gyah!”

I do not know what you are crying about, but could you try to sound a little more feminine when you scream?

“The grass! Look at it! It’s moving!”

“That’s because of the wind. Huh...” Yogiri looked to where Tomochika was pointing. The stony surface of the cliff quickly gave way to grass. It was swaying back and forth, rising to about knee height. It took him a moment to realize what was wrong, but there was certainly something unnatural about it. There wasn’t any wind at all, but the grass was still moving. And even if the wind had been blowing, it wouldn’t have explained the irregular way it moved.

“What is that? Is it alive or something?”

“Ha! We came to check since we saw the path, but looks like we got a nice clean catch! Lucky us!”

Before they knew what was happening, armor-clad figures appeared and surrounded them. They hadn’t seen anyone, but the strangers might have been hiding behind the nearby rocks.

There were five of them. Helmets completely obscured their faces, but judging by their voices, they were middle-aged men. Although it was just a first impression, Yogiri didn’t get the feeling they were good people.

“Can I ask you some questions?” he said. They had heard a little about the situation here, but there were many things they didn’t know. Hearing more from one of the locals seemed like the fastest way to get up to speed.

“Nope! You’ll have to die right away! Hey, make sure they don’t touch the grass! It would be a waste if they got infected!”

“Yeah! Gotta keep that meat fresh!”

Though their faces were hidden, they were clearly ecstatic. They must have seen the two of them as witless prey that had walked right into their

hands.

Looks like we will not even have the opportunity to reach a city, Mokomoko said with a sigh.

"We haven't been here two minutes, and they're already trying to kill us!" Tomochika cried, cursing their fate.

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Chapter 6 — It's a Martial Arts Technique Where I Throw Something So Fast You Can't See It

Yogiri and Tomochika were surrounded by five fully armed men. Metal armor covered them from head to toe, and they held swords. It seemed they had no desire to talk things through and were aiming to kill the two of them. The way they called them "fresh meat" made it sound like they intended to eat them. Yogiri could see killing intent emanating from them like a black fog. They were likely already in range to attack.

"Mokomoko, can you restrain them or something?"

While they seem quite skilled, I believe Tomochika is enough to disarm them if it is a simple brawl. However, they likely also possess the Gift. In that case, she would not stand much of a chance.

"Then I guess I'll deal with them. Stay back, Dannoura."

Yogiri stepped casually towards the first man, who couldn't react until Yogiri was right in front of him. Yogiri wasn't a skilled fighter, but he naturally had no fear of his enemy. There was no hesitation or nervousness in his actions. Because of that, his opponent failed to be on guard against him as he walked forward.

Yogiri stretched a hand out and placed it on the man's chest, finally prompting him to react. He lifted his sword up to strike but never managed to bring it back down. He collapsed motionless on the spot.

"Uhh, what do you call it? Sniping?" Yogiri said.

That refers to guiding an opponent's actions from afar, Mokomoko replied. *You are likely referring to a technique that penetrates armor. In the Dannoura style, it is called Penetration.*

"Yeah, that one. Penetration. I can ignore armor and inflict damage straight through it," Yogiri said, turning to the other four men. Of course, he was just bluffing and had used his instant death power to kill the first one.

“What?!” They never expected Yogiri would attack them. The men began to panic.

“You’re planning on killing us, right? Of course I’m going to fight back.”

“Dammit!” One of the men swung his weapon from quite a distance away. It was a kind of ranged attack they had grown used to in this world. Yogiri deftly sidestepped the attack. Any attack that would be enough to kill would be visible to him as a black line before it happened. Avoiding it was easy for Yogiri at that point, but from their perspective it made him look like a master. He remained totally composed, stepping out of the way of the attack before raising a hand towards the man who had swung his sword. The man immediately collapsed.

“I-Impossible!”

“This is sniping. It’s a martial arts technique where I throw something so fast you can’t see it.”

“You’re just making it up as you go, aren’t you?” Tomochika sighed.

“I’m sure you thought we’d be easy prey, but this is how it is. So, what next?”

“Something’s wrong! No one with the Gift could use the path and just wander in here! Anyone who made it here should be nothing more than prey!”

“That’s what I want to ask you about. Can we talk about it?”

“Of course not! Those two just let their guard down! We underestimated you, but now that we know you’re strong—”

This continent was overrun by constant bloody warfare. If these men were aligned with one of the four factions, they must have been reasonably strong themselves. It was obvious they would have special powers and would likely have ways to deal with others having powers as well.

But they couldn’t take any of those measures here. The moment they tried to do anything, Yogiri recognized it and retaliated, causing another two of the men to collapse. One died while speaking and another while silent.

“I think you guys rely on the Gift too much. Just accept what’s happening in front of your eyes.”

The people in this world had absolute faith in the powers they held. When it failed to function, it seemed like their brains did too. The final remaining man screamed as he turned and ran, finally realizing he was now the one being hunted.

They could finally get some talking done. Yogiri killed the man's right foot. Restricting the target of his power was tricky. This time, he was trying to only target the big toe of the right foot. That way, even if he missed slightly, the man should still survive, but the sudden loss of feeling in the tip of his foot would cause him to stumble and fall.

Just as Yogiri had hoped, the man tripped and fell forward, landing in the grass beyond the stony ground.

"Stop running. We just want to ask you some questions."

The man shrieked. He might have been confused about why he had suddenly fallen, but that kind of cry was too much of an overreaction. As Yogiri thought that, the grass began to wrap itself around the man, which must have been what he was afraid of.

Yogiri no longer felt that calling the stuff "grass" was right. It was green, long, and thin, and covered the ground. It looked just like grass, but the way it writhed was unnatural.

"P-Please, save me! Pull! Get me outta here!"

The grass-like strands had wrapped entirely around the man. They groped all around his body, like they were trying to find the gaps in his armor.

"I guess I have to if we want you to talk."

But if they got close enough to pull the man out, the grass would probably attack Yogiri as well, so he killed the grass around the man before approaching.

"I'll help you, but answer some questions for me."

"O-Okay! I'll tell you anything! Just save me!"

Yogiri grabbed the man's legs and pulled him out. As an adult man wearing plate armor, he was fairly heavy. Yogiri managed to get him back to the clear stone ground, but it was exhausting work.

"What is that stuff? I knew it looked weird." It writhed despite there being no wind. He had thought it was strange but had never expected it to attack someone.

"Am I...okay?" the man asked between gasps.

It took a little time, but he finally calmed down. Yogiri took the time to catch his breath as well.

"I want to ask you about a lot of things, including what just happened, okay? If you try to hurt us again, I'll kill you."

"Okay! I won't do anything! I'll tell you everything I know! Please, spare

me!”

“What do you think? I’ve gotten better at this negotiation thing, haven’t I?” Yogiri had been bothered by how often he was told his diplomatic skills were lacking.

“That’s not negotiating, that’s just coercion!” Tomochika responded.

The threat of violence is a fundamental backdrop to the art of negotiation. But...

Apparently, his companions didn’t agree.

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“My name is Yogiri Takatou. What’s yours?” There may have been no point in introducing himself, but it would be difficult to have a discussion without knowing each other’s names.

“I’m Matsuo.” Maybe as a gesture of good faith, Matsuo lifted the visor of his helmet as he gave his name. He looked like a middle-aged man, somewhat Japanese, but there were plenty of people like that in this world, so Yogiri didn’t pay it much mind.

“There are four countries on this continent, right? Which one are you with?”

“The Slow Life League.”

“Didn’t seem that way to me!” Tomochika interjected.

The man spat. “I never liked it either. I got forced into it when I first came here.”

“Why did you attack us?”

“For your meat. For food...”

“Huh? You were going to eat us?!” Tomochika flinched.

“We weren’t going to eat you! But fresh meat is like gold around here!”

“There’s not much meat?”

“Yeah. There are few wild animals on the continent. People are barely able to raise livestock.”

“Why?”

“You saw the stuff that grabbed me earlier, right? It’s called Seyla. It’s all over the continent. It turns anything it grabs, whether plant or animal, into an undead monster. Of course, you can’t eat it. You can boil it or burn it, but it never dies.”

The word “Seyla” caught Yogiri’s attention, but it was unrelated to the current conversation, so he set it aside for now.

“So, uhh...isn’t it bad enough here that the four countries have bigger things to worry about than each other?” Tomochika sighed.

“Yeah. I feel like you have better things to do than fight.” Yogiri felt the same way.

“Hell if I know. I have no idea what the higher-ups are thinking, but it definitely doesn’t seem like they’d be willing to cooperate.”

“So you were planning on killing us and selling us as meat.”

“Exactly. The only people that come here through the path are weaklings who can’t fight. We thought we were really lucky to notice you...”

“You mean the light we walked on? Doesn’t anyone else use it?”

“Traders use a larger path that takes them right to the neutral zone at the center of the continent. Anyone who gets dumped out here is just a weakling no one cares about. Normally.”

“I see. So your outfit is to protect you from the Seyla?”

“Yeah. You can’t let it touch your skin. Luckily, the Seyla can’t infect anything tiny like spores or seeds, so if you cover your body entirely, you’re mostly safe. Well, underlings like us have to dress like this, but the stronger guys can put up a barrier to keep it out.”

“So if we had accidentally stepped into the grass—”

“You would’ve become one of the Seyla too. We wanted to get to you before that happened.”

“Why didn’t that Potenti guy tell us anything about this?!” Tomochika shouted angrily.

“He didn’t seem to care about us. He probably thought we’d die right away, since we were just ordinary humans.”

“I’m sure Hiruko and Luu will be fine, but does Hanakawa have any way of dealing with this stuff?”

“I’m sure he’ll be fine too.”

“Can you stop having so much faith in him for no reason?! We should definitely try to go and help him!”

“You say that, but he’s probably really far away. At that academy or whatever.”

“Suudoria Academy? Yeah, that’s pretty far,” Matsuo said. “The continent is about two thousand kilometers from its south end to the north

end. You're right in the middle, so if you went straight there, it'd still be a thousand kilometers away."

Matsuo gave them a rough outline of Belm. It was two thousand kilometers from the south end to the north end, and four thousand kilometers from east to west. It felt a little small for a continent but was still plenty large for their purposes. Each of the four nations held one of the corners of the continent, trying to keep the Seyla at bay. They continuously warred over control of the territory that had yet to be infected. Anyone would think that leaving a place like this behind would be the smart choice, but apparently, that was impossible. Once someone came here, they couldn't leave.

"So Potenti lied to us! You asked if we could leave, right?!"

"He said that it's up to the countries' own rules."

"Oh, no, as long as you two don't get infected by the Seyla, you should be able to get out. Ordinary humans can pass through the barrier like it's not there." He must have been talking about the invisible wall that Hiruko had run into. If that was the only problem, Yogiri and Tomochika should have been able to escape with no problem.

"But that means everyone else is stuck here."

"We'll just have to cross that bridge when we get to it."

First, they needed to find the Philosopher's Stone they had come here for. They could worry about escaping after that. It was always possible they would be able to make it back to Japan without ever leaving Belm. Worrying about it now wouldn't help them.

"Anyway, haven't we heard the word Seyla somewhere before?" Yogiri asked Tomochika. He thought she might remember better than he did.

"Seyla, huh? I think I'd remember a name like that. Wait, was there a Sage named Seyla? It sounds similar to the others, like Sion, Lain, and Raiza."

"Not much connecting them except that they have short names. Oh, right." Yogiri suddenly remembered. "Seyla...like Seira Tendou?"

"Hm? Oh, you know about it already? Yeah, that's the official name." Matsuo gave them a puzzled expression.

"What, is that someone's name?" Tomochika asked.

"Yeah. Seira Tendou. The name of Sage Lain, Reine Tendou's younger sister." Yogiri finally remembered he had heard that name from Risley.

Chapter 7 — What If I Grew Up and Ended Up with a Figure like Tomochika's?!

After the defeat of Raiza in the City of the War God, Risley had called for Yogiri. He was heading to Risley's room in the castle. She wasn't a half-demon, but as Euphemia's master, the other half-demons treated her with respect. She had been given a rather fancy room. It was likely one that had been used by either Raiza himself or one of his close associates.

When Yogiri entered her room, a servant guided him to a sofa inside. After a short wait, Risley came in and sat on a sofa across from him.

"I came because you said you'd give me a Philosopher's Stone, but are you asking for anything in return? I already said I wasn't going to marry you."

"Ugh...please stop bringing that up. I wanted to wait until you've forgotten about it to bring it up again..."

"I don't think my answer will change regardless of when you ask."

"But what if I grew up and ended up with a figure like Tomochika's?! Would you think about it?!"

"I guess I can't say it will *never* happen." He found the possibility extremely unlikely, but he couldn't say it was totally impossible. For now, he decided to give up on constantly repeating his rejection.

"So, about the Philosopher's Stone," Risley continued.

"You said you wanted me to kill someone, right? I think I already refused that as well."

"Umm...for now, let me give you the stone anyway. There's no reason for me to hold on to it." She pulled the stone from her pocket and placed it on the table between them.

"Are you sure?"

"Yes. But just in case, there's something I want to tell you as Lain's successor. So please listen to my story. Is that a fair trade?"

"Okay. If you just want me to hear you out, I can do that." Though he

couldn't just happily accept a request to kill someone, he felt bad taking the stone from her for nothing. He didn't mind at least listening to what she had to say.

"The person Lain wanted to kill is Seira Tendou, Reine Tendou's twin sister."

"Hearing it's her sister makes me want to do it even less," Yogiri said, a little taken aback. He wasn't interested in getting involved in a family dispute, especially one that involved killing.

"Lain and Seyla were brought here from another world as Sage candidates, just like you."

"So they're Japanese then? Judging by their names." There were a fair number of Japanese people that ended up in this world, so it wasn't that surprising.

"That's right. Lain and Seyla were given the class of Twins by the Gift. They could share all of their senses and magical energy. Though it was convenient, it wasn't particularly strong." As she said, there were plenty of incredibly powerful classes like General and Dominator. It didn't seem like much compared to those. "Actually, their chances of becoming Sages were really small. But you know how this world is. Their only choice was to try as hard as they could, so they did. I guess it feels kind of distant from me, though."

"But Lain was an Origin Blood, so she was immortal, right?"

"Umm, we'll get to that; please hold on."

"Sorry, I'll be quiet."

"The two of them tried really hard to become Sages and found a relic belonging to a god that was once worshiped in this world in some ancient ruins."

Yogiri remained quiet.

"Uhh, you don't have to be *completely* silent, you know."

"It's fine, just keep going to the end."

"I guess there's no point in drawing it out. The relic had the ability to transform people into something inhuman. In short, that's how Lain became an Origin Blood. But actually, the one who used the relic was Seyla. They argued a bit over who should use it. They didn't really know what would happen when they did, so Lain thought she'd experiment on herself. But whoever gained a new power would be more likely to survive in this world,

so in the end her younger sister ended up using it."

"What was this relic?"

"It was a metal box about the size of a palm. When Seyla opened the box, something jumped out and wrapped around her. It stuck to her skin and then melted into her body. She immediately began to swell up and lost her form as a human. Lain regretted what they had done, but she knew panicking wouldn't solve anything. So she used her powers as a Twin. By sharing their senses, she hoped to take some of Seyla's pain from her. But the pain was far more than she could ever have imagined. The relic didn't just transform her body, it also infiltrated the very foundation of her soul. Lain couldn't bear it. She blacked out numerous times and lost track of who she was, but at that point she had already become immortal and unchanging. Even if her mind broke or warped, it would always return to perfect condition. She thought that cycle of agony would continue forever, but suddenly it ended, and Lain was alone."

After that, Risley stopped.

"So? What does that mean for me? I don't get why she'd want me to kill Seyla. What happened after that?"

"Well, Seyla was missing, and the two never reunited. Lain looked all over the world but never found her."

"Maybe she was already dead?"

"Lain was sure that Seyla was still alive. The power of the Origin Blood was only a small part of the power Seyla had obtained, so she likely had a type of immortality that was stronger than Lain's."

"I still don't know why she'd want her dead."

From the beginning, Yogiri didn't like using his power for anything other than self-defense. Killing someone because he was asked to, or because they made him angry, or because they were a bad person felt like it was a slippery slope.

"I think you'll understand when you meet her."

"Will I? I never even saw Lain."

If they were twins, they should look identical, but Yogiri had never seen Lain for himself. She had moved at such high speeds when attacking Hanabusa that he had never had the chance to see her face.

"Okay, then. If I see her, I'll think about it," he said.

If Seyla attacked him, he would likely kill her in response. He didn't

expect he'd go out of his way to find her, but if he ended up finding her somehow, then he'd have no other choice.

"Lain thought Seyla might have been with the Sage Van. So if you're looking for more Philosopher's Stones, there's a good chance you'll come across her."

"If she knew that, why didn't she go to find Seyla herself?"

"Van has control over a certain part of the world, but the details are kept hidden from the other Sages. So when she checked the whole world and never found her, Lain thought there was a possibility she was in the territory under Van's control. I guess it's still just speculation, though."

"And she didn't know where that territory is?"

"Right. No one does."

"They were both Sages, though. Why didn't she just ask?"

"Apparently, he just dodged the question."

"I thought the Sages would get along with each other."

"I don't know much about that either, but it seems they aren't all that unified."

The Sages were each responsible for a given territory and had the mission of repelling any Aggressors that appeared in their domain. As long as they did that, there was no need for them to cooperate with each other or to share any information.

"Anyway, I get what you wanted to tell me. I've listened to your story, so if you don't mind, I'll take the Philosopher's Stone now."

"Okay. Even I don't feel like I have much of a connection to Lain, so I don't really care if you ignore it, but it felt like I was carrying heavy baggage this whole time. So I'm glad I finally got to give you the message."

Yogiri took the stone. He couldn't help but feel guilty, like he was tricking her somehow.

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"That's the story I heard from Risley."

"I feel like you could have told me that story right after you heard it...though I guess if we never met Seyla, it wouldn't have mattered."

If he had told Tomochika about it, she could have helped in the search, but he never intended to proactively look for Seyla himself. Yogiri didn't feel like there was much point in sharing that information with her.

"So, is that Seyla connected to this grass somehow?"

"It seems that way. Are you sure this is called Seira Tendou?"

"Yeah. That's the official name. Most people just call it Seyla, though. No idea where that name came from. That's how it was when I first got here."

"Do you know what the Seyla is?"

"No clue. I only know that if it touches you, it transforms you into an undead creature. It seems like the most annoying thing on this continent, so all of the factions are looking into ways to deal with it. Speaking of which, the stuff that grabbed me died, didn't it? Did you kill it?"

"Yeah. I used a Dannoura School technique," Yogiri said casually. He had told them he was using martial arts earlier, so he decided to stick with that story.

"Can you not steal our name?! Also, you're being way too flippant about it!"

Hmm...if we allow him to take the name, it could help in spreading the name of the Dannoura School...

"We don't need to spread it! We're trying to go back home anyway, so what's the point?!"

That may be true, but there is a kind of romantic appeal to spreading the name of our house in another world, don't you think?

"But it's being spread by Takatou just making stuff up! No one is going to be able to copy what he's doing!"

"The Dannoura School, huh? Seems terrifying..." Matsuo immediately swallowed what Yogiri told him.

"Are there any cities around here?" Yogiri asked.

"There are, but I don't think there's a point in visiting them."

"Why not?"

“All the people there have been infected by the Seyla. They can’t even hold a real conversation anymore.”

“We don’t have anywhere else to go, so I guess we’ll take a look anyway. Which way is it?”

“South from here.”

“Okay, we’ll head there. What about you?”

“Uhh...I’ll pass. I’ll wait for someone to come find me.”

Yogiri wasn’t sure he liked the idea of abandoning this guy out in the middle of the wilderness, but if someone would find him, they could leave him be.

They headed towards the grassland. There was a road there, so if they followed it south, they should make it to the city. As if it recognized someone had approached, the grass all around them shifted in their direction.

“This is...kind of gross.” Tomochika murmured.

“What should we do about it? Do I really have to kill all of it? You’ve got leggings on, so you should be fine, right?”

“No way! There’s no way such thin fabric can keep that stuff out!”

“Then I guess I’ll just kill enough to make a path for us.”

“We’d really be stuck if you weren’t here, huh?”

If the young man wasn’t with us, we would have died immediately after being summoned to this world.

Yogiri killed a stretch of grass three meters wide in front of them. It immediately withered and shriveled, creating a path for them. He stepped onto the dead grass.

“Wow...the rest of it is really trying to get at us, huh?” Tomochika hesitantly followed him. The still-living grass turned to point at them. It was hard to say how much of a will it had as a plant, but it seemed like it was desperate to touch people.

They continued forward, Yogiri killing the grass in front of them along the way. After proceeding for a while, they made it to the stone road. The road was about five meters wide, so if they walked down the middle of it, they didn’t need to worry about the grass.

“I guess south is to our right?”

“I don’t know about this city...”

“Maybe the people infected by the Seyla won’t be able to talk, but there might be some uninfected people still there.”

“Well, at least we might be able to rest there!”

“It would be a lot easier to find the Philosopher’s Stone if Luu was with us.”

Luu could tell when there was a Philosopher’s Stone nearby. Rather than searching an entire continent blindly, it might have been smarter to try and find her again.

“Luu went to Himeln, wasn’t it? That was in the top right of the continent. I don’t think we’ll be able to walk that far, so we’ll need to find a way to travel.”

“The four factions are camped in the corners of the continent and fighting each other, right? I guess we just have to hope they have some sort of vehicle that lets them get around.”

Though they were possibly out of luck, there was no point in worrying about that now. They set out for the city, choosing to be optimistic.

Chapter 8 — I'm Going to Attack You with This Wand! If I Die, Then I Win!

In a fight like this, Rick didn't stand a chance. Though he had become the Swordmaster, it wasn't due to any skill on his part. With no other candidates, he had been given the title as a last resort. Of course, Swordmaster was a proper class recognized by the System of this world, so he had gained numerous powers just by inheriting the title. He had gained countless abilities that could be used against enemies there.

However, that's all it was. Before becoming the Swordmaster, Rick had only been at the rank of Royal Blade. His skill with a sword was still at that level. Compared to the other Knights who could split the earth, cut through space and time, and move faster than the speed of sound, he had no chance of keeping up. Rick was forced to watch the fight from a distance.

Though it was frustrating, trying to force his way into the battle would only slow the others down. He could only watch as the Knights under him rushed forward and were mowed down, regardless of their skill. As the Swordmaster, they couldn't afford to risk him dying. Normally, if the Swordmaster died, the title would automatically be passed to someone who was qualified. But what did that accomplish in this situation? The Knights of the Divine King were being slaughtered. Before long, all of those who were qualified to inherit the title would be dead, and the power of the Swordmaster would disappear from this world.

"Oh, you are rather impressive. This is much more fun than dealing with that self-important woman!" At some point, the UEG had split into four people. Facing her were four Knights. They were the only ones who had managed to actually put up some sort of fight. The rest had been mercilessly cut down. Though it wasn't clear whether they were dead or alive, they were on the ground, unmoving.

"Hiyaah!" Bram of the Heavenly Blade threw his enormous ringblade. As the blade howled towards her, the UEG deflected it with a backhand swing.

But that wasn't the end of the attack. The deflected blade split in two, both halves arcing back towards her. Every time the UEG knocked them away, they split apart and came back around. Before long there were more blades than could be counted, and the UEG was on the back foot.

At the same time, the other Knights were fighting the other UEGs. Marton of the Resonating Blade stood at a distance from the woman, swinging around a blade with strange holes in it. As it moved, the sword wailed, causing the earth to surge, the wind to howl, and thunder to resound.

Marino of the Demolishing Blade had a weapon like fog. The blade of her sword was hazy and unclear. When she swung it, the UEG's own weapon was sliced cleanly in half. Anything Marino's blade touched dissolved and vanished. Recognizing that defending against it was impossible, the UEG hurriedly began dodging out of the way.

Orba of the Absolute Blade held no weapon at all. He fought using kicks and punches, but his barehanded strikes had no trouble deflecting the UEG's sword and pushing her back.

I am not Miss Dannoura, but he hardly seems like a swordsman, does he?

Rick recalled a girl he had traveled with in the past. She had complained about Teresa of the Thunderous Blade fighting in a way that didn't seem to match the name "swordswoman." As one climbed the ranks of swordsmanship, they grew more and more distant from humanity. At some point they even overcame the need for a weapon, but Rick didn't know much about that. He could understand swinging a weapon to strike an opponent outside of one's reach, but throwing away the sword entirely and fighting with one's bare hands was beyond his understanding.

That said, the monstrous skill of the swordsmen before him was encouraging. Rick glanced behind him. The Divine King was in the process of performing some sort of ritual. In response to the complicated motions of her hands, light drew lines in the air, creating a sphere covered in complex geometrical shapes. He had no idea how far along the ritual was, but he could tell that magical energy was gathering in the center of that sphere. It would only be a little longer. If they could stall awhile, the Divine King should be able to break the stalemate.

Rick was essentially powerless here, so as much as it irked him, he could only stand and watch the fight. But before long, he noticed something was amiss. The fight was far too even. This was an opponent the Divine King was

going to great lengths to defeat. There should have been no way for the Knights to defeat her, no matter how powerful they were. And yet the fierce battle continued.

The UEG was likely holding back. Gauging each of her opponents' abilities, she was fighting at a level to match them. Though that was perfect for their purpose of buying time, it left him feeling uneasy.

"Rick! How long is this going to continue?!"

Lynel called out to him. He couldn't help but feel ashamed, being unable to participate in the fight even after telling Lynel to go hide. In the end, Rick had ended up being just as useless.

"She has already begun condensing the magical energy, so it should only be a little while longer," Frederica said from Lynel's side. She had once recklessly attempted to slay a Dark God on her own but had apparently become more careful since then. She wasn't attacking with no regard for the strength of her opponent anymore.

The sphere of light had begun to shrink. The amount of magical energy pouring in was increasing, so things seemed to be going well.

"I have no idea what's going on, but if the Divine King pulls this off, we'll win, right?" Lynel asked.

"This is a ritual to seal away a Dark God. It can seal the target away in a prison of time."

"But the last time she had to sacrifice herself to do it, right?"

"No, normally the Dark God would be sealed away alone, so if things go well, there should be no problem." But Rick had no confidence it would actually go that well. He still wasn't sure what exactly was happening in this situation.

"Hmm. This has been quite interesting, but time is up. Restrain yourselves," the UEG instructed.

That simple command dropped the Knights to the ground. They were each on their stomachs, their faces pressed into the dirt, like something from up above was pushing them down. Though they struggled desperately to resist, any progress they made resulted in them immediately being pushed back down.

Three of the UEGs disappeared, leaving one. In the end, they had failed to so much as scratch her as she toyed with them, but their objective of buying time for the Divine King had been achieved.

“Is there a way to beat someone who can make clones of themselves so easily?!”

“I would like to believe there is no such thing as an invincible foe. Also...my Holy Sword Orz is telling me it is not an opponent that cannot be defeated.”

The weapon in Rick’s hand was a legendary Holy Sword, passed down through the royal family. Though the authenticity of the legend was in doubt, it was true it had slain the goddess Vahanato at the sealing tower. The sword was now letting off a dull heat, trembling faintly. It felt to Rick like it was demanding to be used, demanding he slay another god.

“Now then, it appears your preparations are more or less complete, but simply standing still and taking it does not sound interesting to me. I shall fight you for a time, so see if you can accomplish something.”

The UEG had underestimated the remaining Knights. If she fought at full strength, all her enemies would be wiped out instantly. Feeling that would be boring, she had held back, enjoying watching others fight desperately against her. But if she refused to go all out against a weaker opponent, that might be the opening Rick needed to make a difference.

Either way, he didn’t have time to calmly think things through. The UEG was walking towards the Divine King. He had to do something to stop her. His skills as a swordsman fell far short of that of the other Knights, but he still had the powers of the Swordmaster. He could only hope they would provide him some chance at victory.

“Umm, excuse me!”

As Rick accepted his almost inevitable death and made to block the UEG, Lynel raised a hand. He was standing right in front of her.

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“Oh? While I was going to take your life eventually, I figured I would spare you for now if you did not interfere.”

Lynel immediately regretted calling out. If he had said nothing, he might have survived a little longer. But no matter how weak he was, he was still a Knight of the Divine King. He needed to do anything he could to support the Divine King in her attack. If he couldn’t fight, he could at least try to buy her some time.

“Uhh, I was hoping I could ask you something...”

“I guess we have yet to have a proper conversation.”

“Well, uhh, you seem like a god of some renown, so could I ask you what your name is?” Lynel had once managed to successfully buy some time by just making a goddess talk with him. He felt like he might be able to pull off the same thing here.

Compared to a god, a human was a pathetic, meaningless being. In that case, she would likely view him as harmless and would have no reason to kill him immediately. So if he tried talking to her, there was a chance she would respond.

“Hmm. I suppose I never introduced myself to you. My apologies. I completely forgot that I demanded you all know exactly who it was that killed you. Allow me to introduce myself again. I am the Ultimate Extermination God. You may call me UEG for short.”

“I see. What a bloodthirsty...err, fantastic name! So what are you doing here, Miss UEG? We were summoned here and told to fight right away, so I have no idea what’s going on.”

“I am the Ultimate Extermination God, and I am here to exterminate you. That said, there is no need for me to personally see to the deaths of all you rabble, so I have left much of the task to my subordinates. As such, I only take the lives of those I find worthy. I noticed the beginning of a great ritual in this area, so I came here, thinking it was started as a countermeasure against me.”

Well, if her objective is to exterminate everyone, there’s not much I can say...

If she had some sort of wish, he thought he might be able to buy some time by granting it for her, but if her only goal was to kill people, there was nothing he could do.

“I have no need to take the lives of the likes of you, but if you are going to stand in my path, then I have no other choice. Consider it an honor.”

“W-Wait, please wait! Umm, from what it looked like earlier, it seemed like you weren’t going all out back there. Does that mean you were just playing with them?!”

“Of course. If I were to exert myself fully, the lot of you would already be dead. I am taking the utmost caution to restrain myself.”

“Uhh, in that case. If you just want to play, I think you can do that without

fighting. Why don't we have a contest?"

"Oh? I suppose in the end it matters little what you do. But I am not that obsessed with combat. I do not particularly enjoy fighting all that much. What kind of contest did you have in mind?"

Lynel could tell from the UEG's eyes that if he said something stupid here, he would die instantly.

"Well, how about this? I have a wand here." Lynel pulled a small wand out from his chest pocket. A red stone the size of his fist sat on the tip of it.

"Hmm. It appears to have some latent magical energy. Is that a type of weapon?"

"Yes. It shoots balls of fire from its tip. I can't use magic or anything, so I had Frederica power it for me." Lynel pointed the wand at the UEG.

"I believe you already understand, but you realize magic of that level has no chance of harming me, correct?"

"Yes. But it has more than enough to kill me a hundred times over!"

"Hm?" A puzzled expression rose to her face at his strange proclamation. It seemed he had managed to pique her curiosity.

"This is the contest I have in mind. I'm going to attack you with this wand! If I die, then I win!"

"Hmmm? I do not follow."

"Look at the wand. Can you use your powers as a god to tell if there is anything strange about it?"

"Hmm...it appears to be filled to the limit with magical energy, but there is nothing strange..."

"So normally, if I use it, it should just shoot a fireball. Right?"

"That appears to be the case."

"But actually, I have terrible luck. So! If I use this wand, there's a good chance it'll just explode and kill me! I'm betting on that! What do you think?! You said you didn't see anything wrong with it. So it should work perfectly fine. That should be enough for us to gamble on what happens, right?"

"If your luck is horrendous, and you wish for it to explode, does it not make more sense that it would fail to do as you wished? And what meaning is there in winning if the condition is your own death? If I win, I will simply kill you myself."

"Oh!"

“You are quite the fool, aren’t you?” The UEG sighed, but she didn’t end the conversation. He was buying time, just like he had hoped. “That said, I have never once had someone propose such a foolish endeavor. Very well. I shall take your bet.”

“Huh? Really?”

“What is wrong? Are you getting cold feet already?”

“Umm...you’re not going to use your godly powers to stop the wand from exploding, right?!”

“Correct. I will not interfere with your wand. The rule of the contest is that if the wand explodes, you win. If it does not, then I win. I suppose if you win, I need to grant you some sort of reward. Very well. You seem to be in a relationship, so I will promise to kill that girl last,” she said, looking at Frederica in the distance.

“Umm...how about just giving up on the extermination?”

“That is impossible. Your life alone is hardly sufficient compensation. If you are going to keep stalling, shall we call off the contest altogether?”

“Okay, here I go, then.” Lynel had died plenty of times. He had lost most of his fear of death, but he wasn’t looking forward to the wand exploding right in front of him. He pointed the wand at the UEG, closed his eyes, and flicked the switch.

With a loud boom, his hand holding the wand was thrown back. The force of the explosion threw him onto the ground. Lynel tentatively opened his eyes. The fact he was feeling pain at all indicated that he was still alive. The wand in his hands was in perfect condition. It had launched a powerful fireball but hadn’t exploded.

So what about the result of the attack? Lynel looked at the UEG. She was lying face up on the ground. Her right leg had been blown off, making it impossible for her to stand.

“Huh? What the—”

“It is just as you see. It failed to explode, so I have won!”

“Really? It just fired like normal?” Lynel was shocked by the result. He had said he would win if he died, but he hadn’t expected that to change his luck. He had been sure his bad luck would have caused the wand to explode.

“But...you said a wand like this wouldn’t be able to hurt you...” That was also bizarre. Even the high-ranking Knights had been unable to harm her, so there was no way the wand Frederica had given him would be strong enough.

“It was what is called a critical hit. Though it is rare, due to the interactions between various types of magical energy, the power of the attack can be boosted to an incredible degree. This enhancement was beyond my expectations, so my body was blown away.”

The UEG modified the sturdiness of her body to match her opponents. In other words, an attack that far exceeded her expectations had a chance of hurting her.

“But why...” It was strange enough that the wand had successfully fired at all, but not only that, it had done so with extraordinary power. For Lynel, who was used to his own atrocious luck, such a thing was unimaginable.

“It is quite simple. I altered your luck. The rule was that I could not interfere with the wand, so that much was allowed, yes?”

“You can do that?!”

“I am a god. Something like that is child’s—”

Then she froze.

“Well done.”

The next thing Lynel knew, Rick and the Divine King were standing at his side. Though he had forgotten his own objective halfway through, it seemed like his plan had been a success.

Chapter 9 — So I Immediately Become a Student Here? I Do Not Mind in the Least!

The UEG was unnaturally frozen. Not a single strand of her hair moved.

“Huh? Does this mean we won?” Lynel asked the Divine King, unable to follow what had happened.

Rick felt it was a little anticlimactic. He had expected a ritual designed to seal away a god to be a bit more impressive, but the UEG had stopped moving and that was all.

“Yes. I was able to seal the so-called UEG in a localized temporal freeze,” she replied.

The UEG seemed to be covered in something like a thin film. Apparently, she alone was frozen. Rick couldn’t help but wonder if such a restricted area was sufficient, but it may have been because of a lack of magical energy the Divine King had to work with.

“That means everything is over, right?!” An expression of relief crossed Lynel’s face.

“Not quite. We have managed to trap her for now, but we do not have the magical energy required to maintain it for long.” They hadn’t been properly prepared. The previous battle had also destroyed a number of the storage towers. “Furthermore, there is insufficient time to acquire more energy. At most, the seal will only last a few minutes.”

If they’d had more time, the Divine King could have called more of her followers, reconstructed the towers, and created a supply of magical energy. But no matter how overwhelming her charisma was, there was nothing she could accomplish in only a few minutes.

“Then what do we do?!” Lynel began to panic. At this rate, all they had accomplished was slightly delaying their defeat. He must have felt his efforts to buy time for them were all for nothing.

“Swordmaster Richard, deliver the finishing blow.”

“You want me to?” Rick replied reflexively. He hadn’t expected to be

called out individually in a situation like this.

"You are a swordsman who has killed gods, and you possess a holy sword designed for such. That combination should reinforce your god-slaying capability on a conceptual level."

Rick had once used the Holy Sword Orz to kill the goddess Vahanato. That fact lent him a conceptual advantage in killing gods. Truthfully, Rick didn't really understand how it worked, but if the Divine King said that was the case, he could do nothing but believe her.

Rick turned to face the UEG, who lay frozen on her back in the middle of speaking. She hadn't moved a hair. Would he be able to kill a god like that? Rick looked closely at the UEG as he thought the situation over.

When he had killed Vahanato, he had stabbed her where she was already wounded. Mere coincidence had revealed that weak point. If she had been in perfect condition, his attack likely would have failed to harm her.

So what about the UEG? She was wounded in that she had lost her right leg, but that could hardly be called a weak point. Her leg wasn't core to her being. The Holy Sword gave off a faint heat, trying to move of its own accord. It was wanting to aim for the center of the UEG's chest. It seemed like it was trying to tell him to attack there.

"Certainly, it seems there is a possibility I can do something. However, I am not confident I will be able to attack her while she is trapped."

"Do not worry. As long as I am outside the barrier, I can manipulate it to some degree. Come now, we have no time. If we fail to defeat her here, all our sacrifices will be for nothing."

"Very well."

Rick stepped over to the UEG's side. Taking his sword in both hands, he pointed it at the center of her chest. That should have been where her divine core resided. If he could pierce it, she should die.

Rick carefully stabbed down. The Holy Sword passed through the barrier and reached the UEG's chest. It pierced through her clothes and split apart her flesh. Any ordinary attack would have failed to reach the core that resided underneath, but the god-slaying Holy Sword found it without issue.

Feeling the resistance from the core, he plunged the sword deeper in. The Holy Sword pierced through her core and unleashed an explosive power. The explosion tore apart her divine core, scattering the body that it had sustained, the pieces dissolving into light and disappearing.

“I’m still not sure what’s going on since I was summoned so suddenly, but it’s all over now, right?” Lynel asked hesitantly.

“Yes. The UEG has been erased.” Rick had felt the attack succeed. As if satisfied with the result, the sword in his hands vibrated happily.

“Uhh, there is one thing I’m wondering about.”

“What is it?”

“The other Knights still seem to be stuck on the ground. If the UEG died, shouldn’t they be free now?”

Rick looked at the higher-level Knights Lynel had pointed out. They were still lying on the ground. Perhaps they had lost all strength to fight back, as they were motionless, barely breathing.

“What is going on?!” the Divine King cried out.

“The answer is obvious. Until I give the order, they will remain restrained.”

The answer came from behind them. They turned to see the UEG standing there. She looked no different from before, staring at the group with an exasperated expression.

“I thought she was dead!”

“Unbelievable. I definitely felt her core being destroyed...”

“Surely those other weaklings who call themselves gods would be killed once their core is destroyed. But a true god has no weaknesses. Even the concept of death does not apply to us.”

He had definitely felt her destruction. Her body had been erased, and her presence had vanished. Rick was absolutely certain she had been defeated. Yet even so, she stood before them like nothing had happened. He found it incomprehensible. Before such an absurdly powerful enemy, he had no idea how to proceed.

“Now then, it appears you have no further ploys. I suppose that marks the end of our encounter.”

The UEG casually swung her sword. Rick leaped forward to defend the Divine King, and both were neatly sliced in two.

His Holy Sword had been useless.

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“No way...” Lynel could only watch. Unlike Rick, who had thrown

himself forward to protect the Divine King, he stood frozen in place.

"I went ahead and disabled your ability to sacrifice your believers to prolong your own life. While they will die soon enough, you would die immediately after them, so there would be no meaning to it. I wish for the people of this world to fully comprehend the sin they have committed and beg for my forgiveness as they die."

Neither Rick nor the Divine King could hear a word she said.

"Now then. I guess I should deal with the leftovers." The UEG looked at Lynel, who instinctively raised his hands. He didn't imagine that would help him, but it was a reflex. "I have no particular reason to spare you here. However, I did end up improving your luck to a drastic degree. If I were to kill you now, that would feel odd, like my own power had failed. As such, I shall spare you and your lover here. I shall return to take your lives someday, but I shall leave you for last. That is extremely lucky for you, is it not?"

"Y-Yes, extremely!" Surviving this encounter was nothing if not great luck. However, the area around Lynel had been devastated. Countless people had died. Even the head of the Axis Church, the Divine King, and the guardian of humanity, the Swordmaster, lay dead. He had no idea what he was supposed to do, even if he did survive.

"Ah, I almost forgot about the others. They should die as well."

With a crunch, the Knights restrained on the ground were crushed.

"Weren't you going to spare them?!"

"Why would you say that? I only said I would spare you and your companion in deference to your extreme luck. Otherwise, you would have no way of realizing how great your luck is. This really is a lucky situation for you, is it not?"

"Ha ha ha ha... I'm not sure about that..." Lynel found it difficult to celebrate.

◇ ◇ ◇

Hiruko had been transported to the Slow Life League, an organization situated in the bottom right corner of the Belm continent. She had appeared in the center of a magic circle drawn in a clearing in a forest filled with bright sunlight. The circle itself held no power, serving only as a marker.

"Oh, you're here." Standing in front of Hiruko was a young, shady

looking guy in loose-fitting clothes. He was sitting on the bare earth, as if not worried about getting dirty.

"Who're you?"

"I'm Yuuri. I'm here to welcome you. You're probably confused after showing up here so suddenly, right? I figured I'd explain things to you."

"Gotcha. But I only care about one thing. Where's Himeln?" Hiruko recalled the events immediately before she was teleported away. Hanakawa had been sent to Suudoria Academy, Enju to Momurus, and Luu to Himeln. That was what the mysterious voices had said.

"Himeln? I guess that would be north of here." Yuuri pointed.

"Awesome. That's all I needed. Thanks." Hiruko jumped up into the air. For now she would fly off to the north.

Instead, she hit something and fell back to the ground.

"What the heck?!" she shouted angrily as she got to her feet.

"Umm...if you could just leave whenever you wanted, there'd be no point to the Conference splitting people up, would there?"

"Then say that first!" Apparently, the same barrier that surrounded the continent also covered the forest.

"I was going to tell you, but you jumped up without listening to me, didn't you?"

"Then how do I get out of here?!"

"I guess you need permission from one of the bosses. Though if they decide you're useless, they'll throw you out right away."

"That probably won't work. I'm just too darned strong. Well, whatever. Take me to these boss people. I'll talk to them."

"That was my intention from the start," Yuuri mumbled as he stood up.

Though she wanted to find Luu as soon as possible, it seemed she'd have to do things the way these people wanted for now. Reluctantly, she followed Yuuri.

◇ ◇ ◇

Luu was teleported to Himeln, the nation in the top right corner of the Belm continent. She appeared in a white room. Though the room had no windows, extravagant lamps positioned around the space filled it with light.

She was sitting on the floor in the middle of a magic circle. A girl in a

white dress and a boy in armor stood looking at her.

"Miss Luu, was it?"

"Y-Yeah..."

"My, how adorable!" The girl stepped closer, her eyes shining. Luu shuffled back on the floor at the intensity of them, a little scared. "I am the queen of this country, Elisabelle. This boy here is Prince Gerhardt."

"Elisabelle, we had first pick, so why did you choose this girl over Hiruko? She would have been much stronger," the boy grumbled.

"I wasn't sure if I wanted Luu or Enju...but Luu here is so much cuter, isn't she?"

"What about Hanakawa? The rule was supposed to be that we prioritized humans."

"Out of the question! A pig like that is more like an orc than a human! He'd fit in better in Momurus! He should be squealing, surrounded by monsters!"

Though Luu didn't care about Hanakawa in the least, she couldn't help but feel a little sorry for him.

◇ ◇ ◇

The mechanical doll modeled after Enju appeared in Momurus, the nation in the top left corner of the Belm continent. She had appeared in a ritual room. Around her stood a minotaur, a skeleton, an orc, a harpy, and a lamia, all of them confused.

Enju hadn't moved an inch. She didn't react to them calling out to her or to them touching her.

"Is she dead? I suppose she would join the zombie faculty, then..." the minotaur said, not sure what to do with her.

"No...it looks more like she is a puppet. Don't you think the golem faculty is more appropriate?" the orc said after looking her over.

"But she was moving fine before she came here, right? What happened? Did she run out of energy?" the harpy asked, confused.

They had only been left with the choices of Hanakawa and Enju. They had thought Enju appeared more useful, but if she couldn't move and fight under her own power, then she was useless to them.

"We're not hurting for fighters, so if she's useless, just toss her." The

skeleton didn't seem to care.

"Let's at least call someone from the golem faculty to take a look," the lamia suggested as she left the room.

Frozen from Yogiri's orders, Enju was nothing but a puppet without Mokomoko's controlling influence.

◇ ◇ ◇

"So I immediately become a student there? I do not mind in the least!"

Hanakawa was standing bathed in light. He figured he had been teleported somewhere. He had planned to stick with Yogiri no matter what, but that plan had clearly hit a snag.

However, he couldn't complain about things not going his way. Avoiding this situation seemed more or less impossible. So instead of getting frustrated, it was better to try and find a way to survive.

"Actually, this may not be so bad. If I were assigned to some kingdom, I would likely be used as an expendable hero yet again, and I have no good memories of my time leading a slow life. In that case, the Academy may actually be one of the better results? On top of that, I was already a high school student, so do I not fit in perfectly in a school environment? And as a school in another world, it may be something like a school for magic. Hmm. If it is indeed a magic school, I cannot help but be curious about the uniform. Would we be given something like robes? Though I would not be the least bit upset if we ignored the setting entirely and had ordinary Japanese school uniforms! That said, if this truly is a magic school, do I not have a considerable advantage? I am already a healer at the maximum level of ninety-nine, after all! Will I not become a highly valued student immediately?! Perhaps I will even find a huge-breasted loli underclassman who might come to rely on me!"

Putting aside all the matters that left him uneasy, Hanakawa focused on having a positive outlook. The light surrounding him soon dimmed, revealing his new location. It was a cramped, dark room. And someone was standing in front of him.

"Level...only ninety-nine? Useless trash..." a girl in a military-style uniform said.

"Ahh. So the Academy is like a military academy, then..."

The girl looked at him with a frigid glare. “But you can relax. No matter how pathetic you are, our Academy won’t abandon you. We’ll beat the training into you until you’re fit for the front lines!”

“Ugh...this is one of those situations where we are fighting an ineffable, overwhelming foe with people dying all around us, isn’t it?”

Hanakawa’s future prospects were starting to look rather dim.

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Chapter 10 — Interlude: I Thought They'd Flap or Something

Degul learned of the King of Manii's death after returning to her base following her failed attack on the cruise ship.

She had heard of the capital's destruction while working as a bouncer at the casino on board the ship. Whether the situation was that complex or it had been intentionally suppressed, knowledge of the king's death hadn't been public at the time. But plausible rumors of the king's death eventually began to float in from all around.

Degul could hardly believe it. It was shocking that the cunning, cowardly, and greedy king of Manii would die that easily. Even if the capital was destroyed, he would use every last citizen as a shield to preserve his own life. That's the kind of man he was.

Following the trail left by those rumors, Degul confirmed the king was actually dead. She felt at a loss. She had vowed to take revenge on the man for killing her mother and trying to kill Degul herself. She had vowed to strangle him to death with her own hands. In order to accomplish that, she had begun work as a pirate to gather the necessary strength, but it had all been for nothing.

From the stories she heard, the only survivor of the royal line was the third prince, Richard. He hadn't been blessed with the power of their bloodline and for some reason had been granted the title of Swordmaster, so taking over the kingdom from him would have been easy.

Degul possessed that rare power to diminish other people's skills. She could prove her lineage just by demonstrating her ability, and with no one else in the royal family bearing that power, she would likely be welcomed.

But she couldn't have cared less. While the king was alive, there was meaning to taking over Manii. Stealing his country and making him a slave so that she could torment him to death would have been worth her time. But with the king dead, she had lost sight of her objective. She didn't care about

the kingdom itself. If the king had valued his throne and peace for his citizens, she would have trampled over them like garbage, destroyed them before his eyes. That had been her only goal. At this point, taking over the country would be a needless burden. She had little interest in the people or territory of Manii.

If she really wanted to be a ruler, it would be faster to continue the path she was already walking. Degul and her subordinates had control over numerous cities and ancient ruins, and a large span of ocean. If she wanted to, she could turn that into a country of her own.

“But a title like ‘queen’ doesn’t suit me much, does it?”

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The pirates under her recognized her as their leader, and that was enough for her. There was no need to set themselves up as a country.

"Yo, boss, what's wrong? You just been spacin' out there so long. What if I was an assassin or somethin'?"

"Huh?"

Degul turned her eyes from where she lay on a sofa to the door of her private room. At some point, one of her subordinates had entered. Failing to notice someone approaching was unbelievable for her under normal circumstances. The king knew that Degul was still alive. He had sent countless assassins after her, so she had to be on guard every hour of the day.

"Sometimes I just want to space out. What is it?"

"The work on the Squid is done."

The Squid was a vehicle Degul and her pirates used in their attacks. The ancient relic was shaped like its namesake and could transport them underwater, making it a priceless tool for them.

"Got it." Degul stood up and left the room.

They were in some ruins at the bottom of the sea. They had discovered the Squid here in a facility that contained plenty of equipment needed to maintain it, so they were using it as it was.

She made her way through the corridors to the dock. A large number of people were working there. Though the ancient relics they had found were far beyond their understanding, they had managed to find detailed instruction manuals. Because of that, the smarter individuals among them could make use of the devices.

At the center of the dock was an enormous pool, which contained the Squid.

"I see it has feathers now."

"Yessir. That's what you ordered," one of her subordinates said, stepping up to her side.

The feathers were like a thin, translucent membrane wrapped around the body of the Squid. They, too, were ancient relics, designed as auxiliary parts for the Squid. They had been discovered in another set of ancient ruins, so she had ordered that they be brought there and equipped. But her recent obsession with finding out what had happened in Manii meant she was barely keeping track of progress on the Squid.

"What are we supposed to do with this?"

“You’re the one who told us to do it, boss.”

Their plan had originally been to use the Squid in an aerial attack on the capital of Manii. However, now that the capital had been destroyed, there wasn’t much point to that.

“Well, either way, being able to fly will come in handy.”

“The problem is, if we go too high or spend too long in the air, somethin’ might attack us.”

“I guess that’s true.” There weren’t many people who could fly, so it wasn’t that widely known, but that was one of the laws of this world. “Can it fly already?”

“D’you eat somethin’ weird? Normally, you’d already be inside.”

The idea of having the head of their organization board an ancient relic they didn’t really understand to conduct a test flight would normally be out of the question. But Degul regularly led recklessly from the front, so it was expected at this point that she would jump on board the moment they started it up.

“I haven’t slept much, that’s all.” She chastised herself as she gave the off-handed excuse. She had devoted her life to getting revenge, which would now forever be out of her reach, but that didn’t mean her life was over. She couldn’t wallow in depression like this forever. “All right, then. I’m sure it’ll be a spectacle either way. It’s ready to go, yeah?”

“Yessir! We figured you’d say that, so we’ve already been gettin’ ready!”

As she approached the Squid, a huge tentacle emerged from the water. One of the suction cups on it split, extending a metal staircase. That was the only way in and out of the Squid.

Climbing the stairs, she made her way inside the vehicle. Unlike the exterior, the interior was surprisingly robotic. It was hard to tell whether it was a living thing or a machine.

Walking through the narrow corridors, she headed to the cockpit. Noticing her arrival, the man in the control seat stopped his inspection to relinquish his place to her. He must have figured she would want to do it herself.

“How do you make it fly?”

“The same as everythin’ else. Just keep floatin’ up past the surface, and you’ll go right up into the air.”

Taking a seat, Degul set the vehicle in motion. They couldn’t just fly straight up from where they were. She led the Squid into the water and then

out into the open ocean where they could ascend.

Controlling the thing wasn't especially difficult. The circular helm in front of her allowed her to pick a direction, and the pedals at her feet controlled whether they moved forward or backward. She had a lever to adjust vertical movement. Pushing it forward would cause them to sink, and pulling it back would cause them to rise.

After reaching the surface of the water, she continued to hold the lever back. The enormous Squid broke through, and its translucent wings extended. The whole craft then began to spin vigorously, providing the necessary lift to pull itself out of the water.

"It's a bit different than I expected. I thought they'd flap or something."

"Well, it's pretty stable in here."

As her subordinate said, though they were spinning in the air, the centrifugal force that it generated didn't affect them in the cockpit.

The Squid continued to soar upward. The melancholy spirit that had overtaken Degul vanished. She had never experienced something so exhilarating.

"Ha ha ha! This is amazing!"

"Boss! You're going too high! Those things will attack us!"

"Perfect. I'll take them out!"

As they continued up, something appeared from the clouds. It was an army of winged soldiers bearing weapons. They were machines likened after angels.

Riding her emotional high, Degul unleashed her lineal power. The angels immediately stalled in the air and fell. They operated through the world's System, and she had the ability to halt their Gift's functions. On top of that, the Squid was unaffected by her power. Whatever moved the ancient relic was unrelated to how powers in this world worked.

The Squid batted the falling angels away with its tentacles as it continued upward, punching through the clouds and into the open sky. Her eyes opened wide at the sight before her. Countless islands of varying size floated in the air.

"So, this is what those things are protecting."

They could see the floating islands occasionally from the surface, but she never thought there were so many of them or that they were so large. The islands were populated by rich, varied scenery. There were mountains, rivers,

roads, cities, and castles. A whole different world than the one on the surface lay before her.

"Interesting. I've made up my mind. All right, punks! We've found our new prey!"

Degul's eyes glittered as she beheld a brand-new destination.

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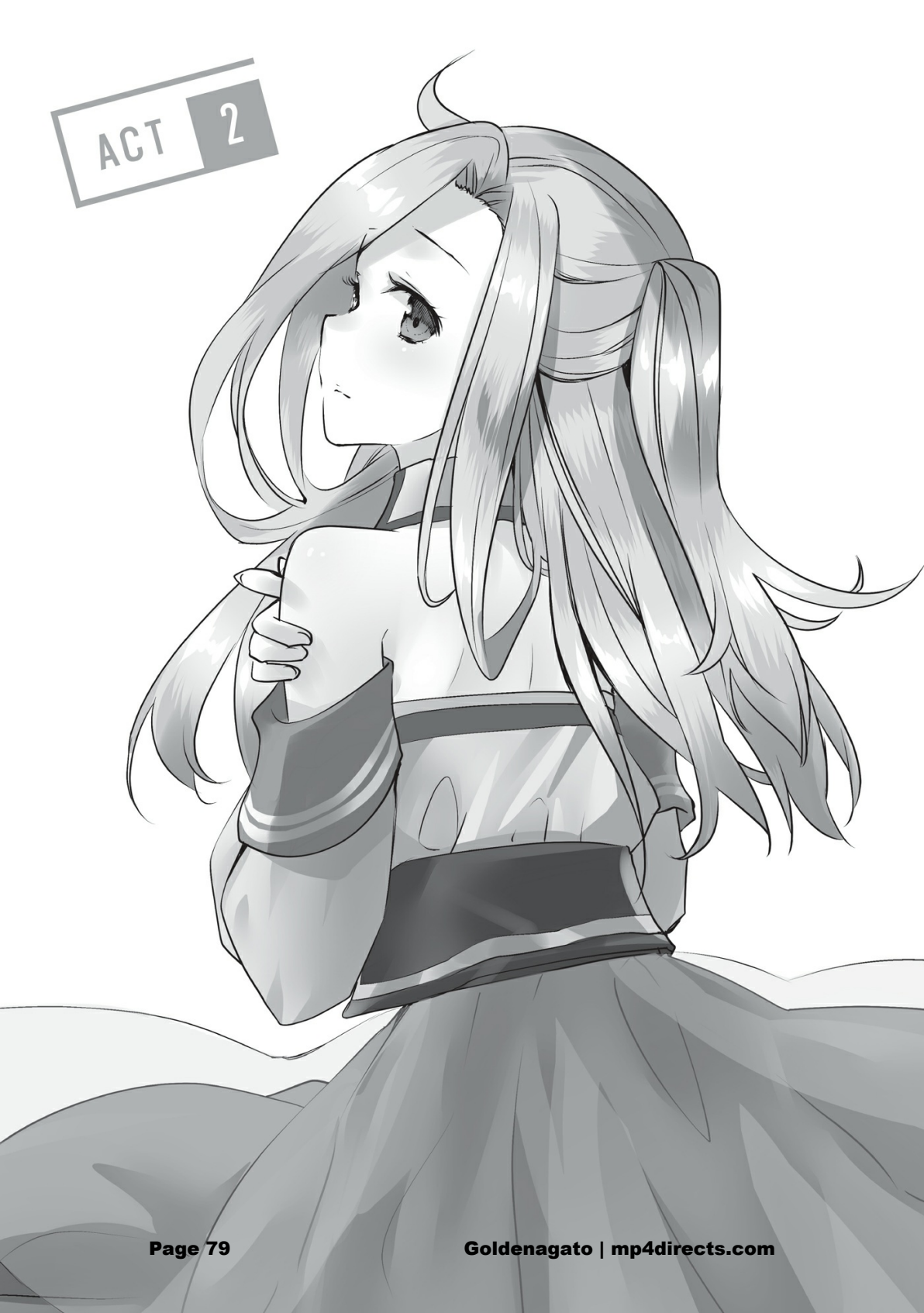

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Chapter 11 — Dannoura-Style Fatal Technique, Underworld Judgment!

Yogiri and Tomochika walked along the road through the grassland. Though the grass shook despite the lack of wind, they weren't in any danger if they stayed in the middle of the road.

At least, that's what they had thought, but it didn't end up being that easy. There were a number of animals that lived in the grassland. Though it wasn't like a flood of animals attacking them, there were plenty of grasshoppers and frogs living in the grass, dragonflies, bees, and butterflies flying around, and birds and bats in the air overhead. When any of them noticed the pair walking by, they'd immediately attack.

"We're done for if they even touch us, right?" Tomochika's expression grew stiff as she considered what would happen if Yogiri wasn't there. No matter how athletic she was, avoiding every single thing that was attacking them would be impossible.

Some sort of protective equipment seems necessary after all. If we still had Furemaru, we could have created a protective suit that covers your entire body, but...

"That suit was a bit too form-fitting for my tastes."

"This place is awful. I can't imagine normal people being able to survive here," Yogiri said, picking up a dead grasshopper from where it lay on the road.

"Hey! Are you sure it's safe to touch those?!"

"It's dead, so it's fine." He looked at the insect from a number of angles, but it appeared to be nothing more than an ordinary grasshopper. There were no obvious indications that it had been infected by the Seyla. "I guess the only difference is that it attacks people."

"But still. What's the connection between this stuff and the Seira Tendou you heard about?"

"Who knows? But maybe this continent is isolated to contain the Seyla. If

so, maybe the Sage knows something about it."

The Sage in charge of this area was a man named Van. They didn't know how much he was involved with the situation on the continent, but in general the Sages were the leaders of this world, so it was hard to imagine he had nothing to do with it.

"For now, I want to prioritize finding everyone."

"They all got sent to different places, right? Who went where again?"

Hiruko went to the Slow Life League. Luu went to Himeln. Hanakawa went to Suudoria Academy. And Enju's body went to Momurus.

"Enju's frozen now, isn't she?"

The AI controlling the Enju robot had been previously shut off. Mokomoko had then hacked into the body, allowing her to move it herself. That meant without Mokomoko, the body wouldn't even be able to blink.

"I'm not sure it's worth the time to go pick her up," Yogiri said.

"Huh? Aren't you worried about her?"

"It's not the real Enju; it's just a robot."

"You seemed pretty stuck on it before."

"It's just a robot modeled after her, but I don't like the idea of some random guy giving her orders."

She was frozen now, so unless there was someone who could control her like Mokomoko did, she wouldn't move. That meant collecting her wasn't much of a priority.

"Look, I can see the city," Yogiri said.

As they crested a hill heading south, a city came into view. Considering they were on the coast, he had expected it to be a port town, but it didn't look like it had any maritime facilities, nor were there any boats in the water. It just looked like an ordinary city that happened to be close to water.

It was also surrounded by walls. That was the norm for cities in this world, so it wasn't surprising. However, their condition was startling. The walls were half-destroyed. Though they were still obviously walls, they had collapsed in many places, leaving the interior exposed. They would be useless as a defensive measure, making invading the city no challenge at all. Their disrepair may have been due to a lack of resources, but there were no signs that there had been any attempt to repair them.

"It's abandoned?!" Tomochika blurted out as she looked it over.

"Seems that way. Doesn't look like anyone still lives here."

“So now what? I feel like it’s a waste of time to go there.”

“It’s not like anywhere else stands out, so we might as well take a look.”

Descending the hill, they approached the city. The road headed straight for it, and no plants grew nearby. Though the Seyla wasn’t really a threat to them, constantly being targeted wasn’t pleasant either. Seeing that there was no Seyla around the city was a relief to Yogiri.

“Is this a gate?”

“I don’t think we need to bother going through the front door.”

There was what appeared to be a gate leading into the city, but it had collapsed. The rubble blocked the entrance, so it would be considerably easier to enter the city through one of the many gaps in the walls. Naturally, there was nothing like a guard watching the gate, so they could make it inside with no issue.

They decided to pass through the gate anyway. Climbing over the rubble, a ruined cityscape greeted them on the other side. It seemed to have been that way for a long time. None of the buildings looked like they had met with any attempt at repair. It was like they had just been left to rot.

“Yeah, this place is abandoned. No doubt about it.” Tomochika sighed.

“At the very least, it’ll be nice to have a roof and walls if we want to rest.”

“I’m pretty sure those walls and roofs will have plenty of holes in them... Huh?” Tomochika started, seeing something.

Yogiri turned to find what she was looking at. Someone was lying at the end of the road. Covered in ripped, bloodstained clothes, it seemed like they had been attacked. In fact, men and women of all ages in similar states lay throughout the streets.

“Takatou...I don’t really want to believe it, but I think they’re alive. I can see their arms and legs moving...”

Yogiri couldn’t tell himself, but Tomochika’s eyesight far surpassed his. It wasn’t hard to believe she could catch such tiny movements even from this distance.

“Maybe we should help them?” he asked.

If they were victims of some sort of incident, helping seemed like the right thing to do. But Yogiri was hesitant. The state of the city was bizarre, so he hesitated to get involved.

Consider their appearance. It is possible they are a form of zombie. I recommend against approaching recklessly.

When Mokomoko said that, the figures suddenly moved. Standing up slowly, they looked at Yogiri and Tomochika.

“Meat...”

“They’re not infected...”

“They aren’t armed... It’s not *them*...”

“Where did they come from?”

Muttering amongst themselves, they slowly began to approach. Their awkward movements lent to the impression that they were mobile corpses.

“What?! Are they really zombies?!” Tomochika cried out.

“But they can talk, so they can’t be, right?”

“You’re awfully calm!”

Talking zombies have existed since long ago. I have seen movies where they have even called ambulances.

“Their complexions seem fine. They look healthy enough to me,” Yogiri replied.

Though their clothes were in tatters and covered in blood, their skin lacked the deathly pale color one would expect. Their torn clothes revealed skin with no indications of injuries, leaving them looking perfectly healthy. In short, they looked like ordinary people who happened to have a bizarre fashion sense.

“They’re mine!!!” One of them suddenly burst into a run. As he did, the others immediately followed suit.

“What’s going on?” Yogiri asked.

“Hey, if they’re attacking us, aren’t you going to stop them?!” Tomochika shouted.

Yogiri raised a hand towards the people running at them. “I’m warning you, if you attack us, I’ll fight back. If you don’t want to die, stop there.”

The people had spoken earlier, so they should have been able to understand him. However, not one of them stopped. They may have just been convinced that Yogiri couldn’t do anything to hurt them. Getting others to understand his power without a demonstration was rather difficult, so he immediately gave up on trying. In the end, it was their fault for attacking. He had already warned them, so he had no reason to hesitate.

“Uhh...Dannoura-Style Fatal Technique, Underworld Judgment!”

“Why do you have a name for it now?!”

“I figured it was easier to understand if it had one.”

“Then think of your own! Don’t steal *our* name!”

The man leading the charge collapsed, face planting into the ground. The next soon followed. By the time the third had collapsed, the others rushing towards him had realized something was wrong. It didn’t seem like they were monsters who had lost the ability to think. They all stopped where they stood.

“Right there. That’s where I set up my technique. If you cross that line, you’ll die.”

Yogiri pointed at the ground in front of him. They seemed to recognize what he was saying, as they grabbed their fallen companions and pulled them back. They then began to inspect their bodies. They didn’t look like they were trying to treat them. It seemed more like they were trying to confirm they had actually died.

“Impossible. There’s no way they could die.”

“That’s right. They’ll probably start moving again soon, like always.”

“Soon? It’s already been too long.”

“There’s no traces of him using a cylinder, though...”

“Look, I broke his finger, and it won’t go back to normal. It’s still broken.”

“No way...”

“It’s true.”

“We can die?!”

The people conversing turned to look at Yogiri again. It was then that Yogiri recognized they all had something in common. Every single one of them had purple eyes.

“No, that’s impossible. There’s no way...”

“It’s easy. All we have to do is check.”

One of the men stepped closer to Yogiri. When he passed over the “line” Yogiri had indicated, Yogiri killed him. The rest of them grabbed the newly dead man and pulled him back, crowding around him once again.

“He’s not moving...”

“Is he really dead?”

“Let’s wait a bit more.”

“Yeah. Energy absorption attacks and those cylinders made the revival process a lot slower than before.”

“But come on. He’s dead, right? No matter how you look at it! He’s not moving at all!”

“That’s true. Even if they don’t revive instantly, they’d always be twitching or something.”

“No way! I can’t believe that! How many times have we gotten our hopes up before for nothing?! Believing now just means a deeper despair later!”

“Then why not just give it a try? You don’t have to expect anything. If you come back to life, it’ll be the same as always. You’ve got nothing to lose.”

They had originally tried to attack Yogiri and Tomochika. But as if they had forgotten their initial objective, they had become obsessed with talking over the bodies of their dead companions.

“Umm...their attitude seems to be changing...” Tomochika said hesitantly. Her fear of being attacked by the people of the city seemed to dissipate.

“Ha ha ha ha... Are you serious?! We can actually die?! Can we?!”

Another of the men rushed at them and then collapsed. Yogiri didn’t know what they were thinking; he was just killing anyone who got close, before they could do any harm. That was all he could do, and it had to be done. However, he couldn’t help but hesitate. Even though they knew they would die, they were still approaching.

“Hey, you guys can talk, right? Then let’s talk about this. Watching you kill yourselves this way feels wrong.”

At Yogiri’s suggestion, they put their heads together again.

“He says he wants to talk. What should we do?”

“Why not? We don’t even know who he is.”

“But we were treating them like fresh meat a second ago.”

“We never actually hurt them, so it should be fine, right?”

“But if we talk and he learns what he wants to, he might leave...”

After speaking for a while, one man stepped forward to give their verdict.

“We’ll talk, but on one condition.”

“What is it?” Yogiri asked.

“We think you have the ability to kill us. Before you leave, we want you to kill everyone here who wants to die.”

“Uhh...let me think about it.”

Yogiri had killed all sorts of things, living and not, but this was the first time he had met someone who had *asked* him to kill them. He wasn’t convinced that them wanting to die was a good enough reason to do it, so he couldn’t agree without question.

Chapter 12 — Takatou...You're Starting to Sound Awfully Brutal

The people in the city guided Yogiri and Tomochika to a house in relatively good condition. "Relatively," because though it didn't have any obvious holes in the walls or roof, it was still run down.

Entering a room that looked like an eat-in kitchen, they sat at a small table. Yogiri looked around the room while they waited. There was no sign of anyone actually living there. It didn't seem like the kitchen was being used, and it didn't look like it had been cleaned. Though the "abandoned" city seemed to be populated, he couldn't help but wonder what kind of life they led here. He couldn't tell just by looking at their surroundings.

"Uhh...so they want you to kill them?" Tomochika asked. "What are you going to do?"

"I can't just kill people because they ask me to." Long ago, he had killed the remnants of some beings at their request. Their consciousnesses had been scraped away by the passage of time to the point where the only thing they had left was the desire to die. They wanted total erasure and understood there was nothing else that could be done for them.

However, it was a different story for someone who was still human, both in form and mind. When Yogiri was younger, he might have killed them without question. But he wasn't that simple-minded anymore.

"Hey, thanks for waiting." A young boy walked into the room. He looked to be about six years old. Compared to the others, he seemed much better dressed. There were no large holes in his clothes, although they were still dirty and worn out. His eyes were purple, just like everyone else's in the city.

"What happened to the others?" Yogiri asked.

"Ah, they can't really think straight. So as the most rational person remaining, I've been sent to act as their representative. My name is Scott. I'm nothing fancy like a mayor or leader, though. I hope you don't mind."

"If you can tell us what we want to know, that's good enough. I'm Yogiri

Takatou."

"My name is Tomochika Dannoura."

After their brief introduction, the boy sat down at the table across from them. "Now then. You seem to be new here. How much do you know?"

"We know that there are four factions fighting, and that this Seyla thing is infecting the plants and animals."

"Then I guess I should start by explaining the Seyla. I'm sure you already know, but we're also infected."

"I heard that infection makes you immortal," Yogiri said. There were plenty of people who would wish for that, but from what they had heard so far, there seemed to be some negative side effects.

"Technically, we can't die or grow older. Once you're infected, you don't age anymore. It may sound odd coming from someone who looks like a child, but I've been this way for decades already."

"Just how immortal are you?" Yogiri asked.

"As far as we can tell, there are no limits."

"Even if your body is ripped apart?"

"Put the pieces back together, and we'll go back to normal."

"What if you're eaten by an animal?"

"The lost pieces will regenerate."

"And if you're burned up?"

"We'll just reappear from the ashes."

"What if you're dissolved in acid? Oh, I guess that's probably the same as using fire."

"Yes. We'd still go back to normal."

"But if you jumped into a pool of acid, you would keep dissolving even if you regenerated, so that's almost like dying, right?"

"Takatou...you're starting to sound awfully brutal," Tomochika interjected.

"We tried that," Scott answered. "We couldn't get a pool of acid, but we did try jumping into a volcano. The lava was enough to keep killing us, but I'm still here."

"Why is that?"

"If you leave someone infected dying over and over like that, eventually they'll reappear in a safe place."

"So...it's not really just about regenerating the body, then."

“Right. We tried lots of things, like sinking to the bottom of the sea and cutting our bodies into many pieces, sealing them in concrete, and scattering them, but in any situation where we can’t regenerate, we just reappear with an entirely new body somewhere else.”

“Even if you’re petrified or frozen?”

“Yes, the same thing happens. And I can tell you, it is a weird feeling to suddenly appear next to your own petrified body.”

“Hmm. What about locking yourself in a cramped box until you go insane? That could be a spiritual death of sorts.”

“You’re a bit too into this, aren’t you, Takatou?” Tomochika said with a sigh.

Yogiri couldn’t disagree.

“We tried that, of course,” the boy said. “Losing touch with reality might be good enough in the end, after all. But it was no use. Mental damage is regenerated by the Seyla as well. Eventually, we will appear outside the box, fully restored. We can even remember going insane, but can’t keep ourselves that way.”

“That’s amazing. It’s like the Seyla has thought of everything.”

“Doesn’t that make you curious, though? We do not get sick or old, and no matter what danger we face, we always return to life somewhere safe. That’s a pretty good deal, don’t you think? So why would people like us want to die?”

“Are you just tired of living after tens of thousands of years?”

“No. Though we’ve certainly lost sense of time after so long, it’s only been a few decades at most. At this point, we haven’t even exceeded a normal human lifespan.”

“Hmm. Then I have no idea,” Yogiri admitted.

From their discussion so far, the only real negative he could think of was the inability to grow up. He could imagine people like Scott being frustrated, stuck as a child forever, but an eternally healthy body was something most people could only dream of.

“There are two primary reasons. One is the hunger. We are always in a state of starvation. There are almost no sources of food on this continent, and those infected by the Seyla can no longer eat the animals or plants that are also infected. Of course, no matter how hungry we get, we won’t die or even lose weight, but our desire for food doesn’t go away. The hunger is

constantly tormenting us, driving us mad. Going completely insane would be preferable, but the Seyla doesn't allow that. We always return to sanity at some point, and the hunger remains. The Seyla makes no effort to reduce our suffering, like it believes that feeling pain is proof we're still alive."

"That sounds...horrible!" Tomochika exclaimed.

"You do like your food, don't you, Dannoura?"

She always eats as much as she can, doesn't she? Mokomoko added.

"Can you stop talking like I'm a glutton character?!" Tomochika seemed to sympathize with the people of the city from the bottom of her heart.

"I can handle the hunger a little better than the others. That's why I am able to act as their representative. Maybe because of having a more developed metabolism, the hunger hits adults harder. With fresh meat in front of them, they can't act rationally."

"No matter how many times it happens, I can't get used to the idea of being seen as food..." Tomochika murmured.

"There are people who aren't infected by Seyla, though, right? Can't you buy normal food from them?"

"That is where the second reason comes in. On this continent, those infected by Seyla are seen as a resource to be exploited. There is no negotiating."

"A resource, huh? I can't imagine that means anything good." Yogiri remembered the sight in the tower in the canyon. He had witnessed half-demons being used as an energy source to power the ancient trap there.

"I'm sure it's just as bad as you think. But it's easier if you see our situation for yourselves." Scott stood from his chair and stepped over to the window. Yogiri and Tomochika followed him over at the implicit invitation. "Take a look outside. It's a normal enough occurrence for us, but if you get caught, it'll be a problem for you, so be careful and stay hidden."

Doing as they were told, Yogiri and Tomochika poked their heads out the window. People had collapsed all over the streets just like before.

"Do they always lie there like that?"

"Yes. There's no need to work to survive, after all." They normally spent all day sleeping on the streets.

"That's definitely not normal," Tomochika said sharply.

"I haven't gotten to that point yet, but I can understand how they feel," Scott replied.

“I never thought something could drive people to giving up like that...” Yogiri couldn’t understand their feelings, but he couldn’t deny that immortality might do that to someone.

After observing the scene for a while, they heard footsteps. Soon, five fully armed people arrived. Their body armor must have been a preventative measure against the Seyla. Looking closely, they seemed a bit different than the thugs from the Slow Life League who had attacked them immediately after their arrival in Belm.

“Soldiers from Himeln,” Scott explained.

“This is the western side of the continent, right? I thought Himeln was in the northeast. They came all the way here?” Yogiri asked.

“They have territory all over the place.” Presumably, being far from their home base didn’t make much difference to them. “Right now, this is a farm belonging to Himeln. Well, they don’t do anything to cultivate us, so I guess ‘hunting ground’ would be more accurate?”

The soldiers stopped a short distance away from a collapsed man. One of them raised a long-handled weapon. Where one would expect a spearhead was a long, cylindrical object. The soldier threw the spear at the man on the ground, a string attached to the weapon extending back to him. The spear punched through the man’s back and into the ground beneath him. He only let out a small cry of pain.

The other soldiers began to use their spears to attack the other infected people lying around the city.

“Bizarre, isn’t it?”

“Yeah. What are they doing?”

“They are collecting energy from us. Those objects on the end of their spears are called ‘cylinders.’ They are devices used to absorb energy.”

“Aside from being immortal, you’re just normal humans, right?” Yogiri asked. “You don’t have exceptional magical energy like half-demons, do you?”

“I don’t know if it’s magical, but we have an infinite supply of some kind of energy. When we die, we come back to life. That requires energy, right?”

“And they can just take it?”

“Yes. Those cylinders contain a deadly poison. Anyone stabbed by them will die repeatedly, and each time they come back to life, the soldiers steal the energy used to resurrect them.”

“I see. Wouldn’t it be more efficient to trap you all in one place and squeeze it out of you over time, then?”

“Takatou, your imagination is getting brutal again,” Tomochika chided him.

“If we get locked up somewhere, we revive outside. No one knows exactly how it works, so they avoid doing anything too risky.”

The soldiers could always do the same thing with animals, but it was easier to use the listless humans. If these people lost the will to live and just wandered around a given area, there was no need to actively confine them. It was easier to simply come and collect energy from them from time to time.

“Are you okay with them using you like that?”

“Of course not. But being immortal doesn’t make us strong. We can’t fight people with supernatural powers like the Gift. At first, we tried fighting back or running away. But collecting energy is absolutely vital for their war effort, so they don’t give up until they’ve collected the energy they need. We learned the hard way that resisting is pointless.”

“Aren’t there some infected people who were strong from the start?” If someone with the Gift was infected and became immortal, they’d be unstoppable. The infected could take over the continent that way.

“When you’re infected, you lose things like the Gift. There are even some people in this city who used to be soldiers, and now they’re just exploited like the rest of us.”

“So they’ve lost the will to do anything and just lie on the ground like that forever,” Yogiri mused.

“Exactly. Do you understand now? This is why we want to die. It’s why we have high hopes for your power.”

Unable to die, constantly being exploited like this, it wasn’t hard to see why they had fallen into despair. If that was going to continue forever, anyone would want to put an end to it. Yogiri could understand why they would end up thinking that way.

After a while, the soldiers pulled on the strings and retrieved their spears. They cleaned the tips of their weapons, then removed the cylinders and inspected them. They then began to discuss something amongst themselves.

“Normally, they would leave at this point... Ah, I see. You killed the ones who would normally be lying on the outskirts of the city, so they didn’t meet their quota.”

“Huh? Isn’t that bad?” Tomochika asked.

The soldiers began heading towards their building. Apparently, they were looking for more prey.

“Maybe we can talk to them?” Tomochika seemed fed up with the situation.

“I doubt it,” Scott answered. “At least, not judging from our experiences so far.”

Knowing exactly how this was about to go, Yogiri couldn’t help but sigh.

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Chapter 13 — Facing Such Danger, I Have No Choice but to Awaken My True Power!

“This is far too much!” Hanakawa shrieked, running as fast as his legs would carry him. With no special powers other than his healing magic, his physical abilities were only slightly better than an ordinary person’s, but he ran like his life depended on it. He was in the obstacle course at the Suudoria Academy’s training ground.

“I cannot imagine this will improve my abilities! After all, I am already at the level limit!” he complained, leaping over a pit and up a mound of dirt.

While it was true that physical training could strengthen his body, next to the power of the Gift he already possessed, any amount of improvement would amount to effectively nothing. In order to strengthen the Gift obtained through the Battle Song system, he needed to fight enemies and gain experience, but he had already reached the maximum level by doing that. In short, there was no way he could get any stronger.

“At the limit?! Who decided that?!” a woman in a military uniform shouted back at him from atop an elevated spot in the middle of the course. She was Ingrid, the one tasked with training Hanakawa. She was a second year student at Suudoria Academy and responsible for training the new recruits.

“Wh-Who?! The System did! The level limit of each race is determined by Battlesong itself! The only way to exceed it is to obtain the Limit Break skill—”

“Idiot! It’s only the limit because you think it is!”

“No, no, no! This is not an issue of nerve. If it is impossible, it is just impossible—”

“Do you really have time to be complaining?! Should I make our cute little puppy speed up?!”

An enormous, four-legged, three-headed creature was pursuing Hanakawa at a leisurely pace. It looked like a shark that had been given the legs of a dog to allow it to walk on land, but on either side of the shark's head were a dog and cat head as well. There were signs of those heads having been sewn on rather than being natural. On top of all that, a number of writhing tentacles sprouted from the creature's main body. It was about the height of a two-story building, looking down at Hanakawa from above.

"Only a single part of that is anything like a puppy! What mad scientist cobbled together this horrifying creature?! Is this the Seyla you were telling me about?!"

Before his training had begun, Hanakawa had been given a brief explanation of the situation in Belm. He had heard about the bizarre creature known as the Seyla and the war between the different factions populating the continent.

"This is a prototype weapon made by the Biology Department. It is not infected by the Seyla, so you can remain at ease."

"Umm, you said you would not abandon me, correct? You realize that if I die, I cannot be dispatched to the battlefield!"

"I know full well that you are a healer. There is no way you will die so easily!"

"If something like that bites me, I'll die long before I have a chance to heal!"

"Don't worry. It's been ordered not to bite you. It'll just be cuddling you with its tentacles."

"Noooooooo! No one wants to see a scene like that!!!"

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Hanakawa sped up. Apparently, he still had some energy left. He was almost at the end of the course. If he went all out a little longer, he would be out of danger.

As he thought that, he suddenly felt like he was floating. At some point, the ground beneath his feet had vanished. Hanakawa sputtered as he struck the ground face first. The intense pain sent his mind whirling, but he couldn't afford to lie around doing nothing. He hurriedly lifted himself up.

"Huh? What is this?" He was in a square space. It was about twenty meters across, the dirt walls about five meters high.

"It is a trap, and an arena!" Standing on the edge of that arena, Ingrid looked down at him.

Something dropped to the ground behind him, making the earth shake under his feet. Though he had no need to check, Hanakawa turned to look anyway. The three-headed monster was looming over him.

"Merely being chased doesn't produce enough of a sense of danger. So we came up with the dash-fight-dash model. It's a kind of interval training."

"Is this not far too cruel?!"

"Of course this is just another obstacle in the course. All you have to do is cross the finish line. But are you comfortable turning your back on that creature while you climb?"

In other words, he would need to defeat or otherwise fend off the monster in order to create an opportunity to escape.

"Ha ha ha. You say that, but you already told me it would not bite me, so I imagine it will treat me with some level of restraint..." Hanakawa shuffled backwards, staring at the monster.

The world in front of him became a blur. It took him a moment to realize what had happened. After feeling a burning sensation in his stomach, spinning through the air, striking the wall, and then finally falling to the ground, he realized he had been attacked.

"So, no restraint at all. The only mercy is that it will not bite..."

Hanakawa had been split in two. One strike from the creature's tentacles had cleanly bisected him. An ordinary human would have been killed instantly or at least totally incapacitated by such an injury, but bearers of the Gift wouldn't die that easily. As long as they were still conscious, they could hold on long enough to save themselves.

"F-Full Heal..." Hanakawa's stomach began to regenerate. Flesh swelled

out of the wound, reconstructing his torso and legs. Being level ninety-nine, his Healing Magic wasn't just for show. He could heal any injury less than instant death without a problem.

"That does not really solve my issue, though..." If those tentacles moved faster than he could see, there was no way he could escape the arena. He couldn't regenerate an entire half of his body that many times. If he kept getting attacked, he would reach his limit before long.

With his lower half now naked, he looked up at the monster, which leaped onto his dismembered lower half.

"Ugh...I cannot say I appreciate watching my own body being consumed like this..." As he stared at the grisly sight in disgust, he noticed something was off. The monster was ignoring him, obsessed with devouring the half of his body he had left behind.

"Umm! Is this not against the rules?! You said it was ordered not to bite me!"

"It's not biting you, is it?"

"Ah, of course." Knowing full well there was no use in arguing, Hanakawa backed down. For now, the monster was obsessed with its meal, so he decided to take the chance to head for the finish line.

He began climbing the dirt wall. It was solid and firm, so with the various depressions and handholds scattered across it, it was surprisingly easy to climb. Once he reached the top, the finish line was right in front of him.

"First Year Student Hanakawa, you're outside the bounds of the course."

"Excuse me?"

At some point, Ingrid had appeared in front of him and fired a bolt of light. The bolt struck him in the shoulder, throwing him backwards to land at the bottom of the arena. He was face to face with the monster once again.

"Wh-What are you doing?!" Hanakawa whined while healing his shoulder. Sure, climbing up the wall had technically taken him outside the course for a brief time. But he figured he could drop back in immediately so it wouldn't be an issue.

"Just like I said. But more importantly, did you think it would be that easy to clear this course? Did you forget we are doing this training to help you overcome your limit?! What meaning is there to a course with no obstacles?!"

"This is absurd! If all you wish is to torment me, then—"

Though he began to argue, he was cut off by a growl coming from behind

him. The monster had finished its meal and was now staring directly at him. While it was impossible to read any emotion in the shark's eyes, Hanakawa figured it viewed him as its next meal. He doubted it would be satisfied with what little it had just eaten. It seemed to have forgotten its orders not to bite him and was intent on eating the rest of him.

"Gah! Facing such danger, I have no choice but to awaken my true power! Rrrraaaaaaagh!" Desperate, Hanakawa roared at the top of his lungs. He then opened the System window, checking to see if anything had changed. But his level was still ninety-nine and his class was still Healer. His stats and skills remained the same. "Of course things would not be so easy! Guts and spirit are hardly enough to overcome the limits of the System!"

In short, he had no choice but to find a solution to the current situation with the powers he already had. Hanakawa pointed a finger at the monster. Though he was a Healer, it wasn't like he had no way of fighting. He could shoot magic from his finger with the strength of a small pistol. That would hardly be enough to harm such a massive creature, but he could hope that in response to the danger in front of him, his magic would exhibit an uncharacteristically explosive power.

At the very least, there was no harm in trying. Attacks with magic were basically guaranteed to hit once a target was selected. Looking at the monster, there were seven targets he could select. The main body, the right head, the left head, and each of its legs.

"Aha, so that is the solution. If I strike the Lorenzini ampullae in the shark's nose, things may go well! Take this! Soul Bleed!"

A bullet of light fired from his finger and bounced off the monster's nose harmlessly before disappearing.

"It just bounced off?! Even if I used the absolute weakest technique, shouldn't it have blown off the creature's head so I can say a line like, 'Wow, that monster sure was fragile' like some sort of idiot protagonist?! No, in this situation, perhaps one of my items could come in handy! Why didn't I think of that?! Surely something like a hero's—wait, why can I not open my item box?!"

"You can't use tools while training. Obviously, we blocked that ability," Ingrid explained from outside the arena as Hanakawa panicked.

"Is that even something you can do?!"

"Now, see what you can do with your own body!"

“I have already run out of options here!”

Hanakawa looked at the monster. It hadn’t attacked yet, possibly because it was conflicted. It wanted to leap forward and devour him, but wasn’t allowed to bite. If it attacked with the tentacles, it would make him smaller, and it wanted to eat him whole, if possible. Even so, it wouldn’t stay paralyzed with indecision for long, and if things didn’t move ahead, Ingrid would likely get tired of waiting and intervene to push things along.

Urgh...my attacks do nothing to it...

Trying to think of another way he could fight back, he realized that something was strange about his last attempt. His magic didn’t have the ability to target individual body parts. Yet when he had used it, it had given him seven options to target. Hanakawa had spent a great deal of time in this world, but it was the first time he had seen a creature like this. Before now, no matter how large the enemy was, he couldn’t target individual body parts.

“Hmm. In other words, though it appears to be a single creature, is it actually an assembly of seven individuals?”

Looking closely, the connections that held it together were pretty sloppy. It looked like they had been haphazardly joined together.

No...there is no way it could be that easy...

Thinking of something reckless, he immediately wanted to give up. There was no guarantee it would work. But it was slightly better than turning and running or charging blindly towards it. That was the best he could say about his plan. With no other ideas, he decided to bet on the one option he could think of. If he was going to get eaten anyway, it was better to try and resist.

Keeping an eye on the monster, he moved around to its side. The creature didn’t respond to his movement. It had heads on its right and left. Its field of view was so wide, it didn’t need to turn to keep an eye on him.

Hanakawa kept going until he was facing the dog’s head, then he ran forward. The tentacles didn’t move. Just as he had predicted, it made no effort to stop its food from running straight at it. The dog head waited in front of him.

Hanakawa lunged forward. “Auto Heal!”

With this spell, his wounds would heal automatically. It was a convenient power, but the effect had an extremely limited duration, and it had a fixed cooldown before he could use it again, so it wasn’t something he could regularly employ. Unless he knew an attack was coming ahead of time, it was

useless.

Just as he reached the dog head, he leaped to the left. Dodging the dog's bite, he would use that opening to attack. At least, that was his plan, but it didn't go as well as he'd hoped. The dog's jaws easily took off his right arm.

Hanakawa shrieked at the momentary pain before his dismembered arm was regenerated by Auto Heal. This was exactly what he had expected. If his head had been crushed and he died instantly, things wouldn't have gone so well, but losing an arm wasn't a problem. He reached out a hand and placed it on the head of the now satisfied dog, currently distracted by its snack.

"Full Heal!"

Hanakawa unleashed the strongest variant of his healing magic, which for some reason had been split up into different levels. The monster immediately began to change. The shark's body began to swell.

Hanakawa's idea had been simple. If this creature was some sort of Frankenstein chimera, healing one of the animals back to its original condition would cause the rest of the creature to fall apart.

It seemed he had hit the nail on the head as the creature gasped in pain. The dog's body regenerated within the body of the shark. Hanakawa then proceeded to heal the other parts of the monster. By the time he had run out of magical energy, the beast had turned into a complex mass of mixed animals. It wasn't dead, but it wasn't able to move anymore.

Hanakawa took the chance to climb up the dirt wall. Making it out of the arena, he made sure to emerge in the middle of the course this time. Forcing his exhausted body forward, he somehow made it across the finish line, where he promptly collapsed. Though it had taken an absurd amount of effort, he had somehow made it through his first day of training.

As Hanakawa lay face down on the ground, struggling to catch his breath, Ingrid stepped up beside him.

"Looks like your level didn't increase. I guess training like this is too soft to get you through the level cap."

"L-Like, I said, humans cannot...go past...level ninety-nine..." Hanakawa moaned as he gasped for breath.

"Whatever. The prototype weapon is useless now, so we'll call it a day. Be glad I'm such a kind senior."

A strange cry erupted from Hanakawa's mouth. He had dreamed of a bright and exciting life after being teleported here, but that dream had been

thoroughly shattered. At this rate, he was likely to die the next day.

He began to think of how he could escape his situation.

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Chapter 14 — I Don’t Really Care; I’m Happy If I Can Just Relax Here

After leaving the forest behind, a rural landscape sat before Hiruko. Cultivated fields stretched out into the distance, dotted with small houses here and there. Though it was a scene full of idyllic beauty, Hiruko barely saw it. She was busy trying to see if it was truly impossible for her to escape. She knew there was no way a barrier made by a human could contain a god, but as far as she could tell, there were no seams through which she could slip.

She had agreed to come here through something like a contract, so even as a god, she was now bound by the rules of this place. If the rules said she couldn’t leave without permission, she had no choice but to obey.

I’m starting to regret forcing my way into this world.

In her own world, she could unilaterally break something as feeble as a human-made contract. But she was an intruder here. Since she had entered without permission, she couldn’t access her full power.

What the heck is going on in this world? Ma being split into pieces is already plenty strange.

As hard as it was to believe, it seemed there was someone on the same level as Luu’s somewhere in this world. Of course, it was unthinkable that Luu could be defeated in a direct fight. Their enemy must have had some sort of trick for beating her, but still, they would have to be someone of incredible power.

I didn’t want to bring Ma home with the job half-done, but at this rate, I should have just gone even if she was incomplete...

Hiruko knew where Luu was. She should have gone back home, collected her strength, and then come back at full power. Of course, it was too late for that now. She had been separated from Luu and locked away within this place. It was basically the worst possible situation.

“We’re here.” Yuuri’s voice brought Hiruko back to the present.

In front of her was a small wooden house. Hiruko was underwhelmed.

She was meeting her faction's leader and had been expecting a luxurious mansion or a castle.

"Don't look so disappointed. We're the Slow Life League, remember?"

"Didn't you say you were taking me to your bosses?"

"We don't have leaders, so I brought you to League Member Touichirou. There's no real difference between any of the league members, but I guess he can solve your problem."

"Is League Member the highest rank for you guys?"

"I guess so. Under the League Members are the Provisional League Members like me. Beneath us are the Laborers, who work outside. Other places have a more militaristic structure, but those three are the only ranks we have here, I guess."

"Whatever. Let's go in."

Hiruko opened the door and stepped inside. The interior wasn't particularly extravagant. There was a kitchen, a table, and a bed but not much else. There seemed to be another room deeper in the house, but that was likely only the washroom. It looked like a place where one person would live alone.

Sitting at the table was a man in workers' clothes. That must have been Touichirou. As Hiruko made to comment on the dull appearance of the room and its occupant, she froze.

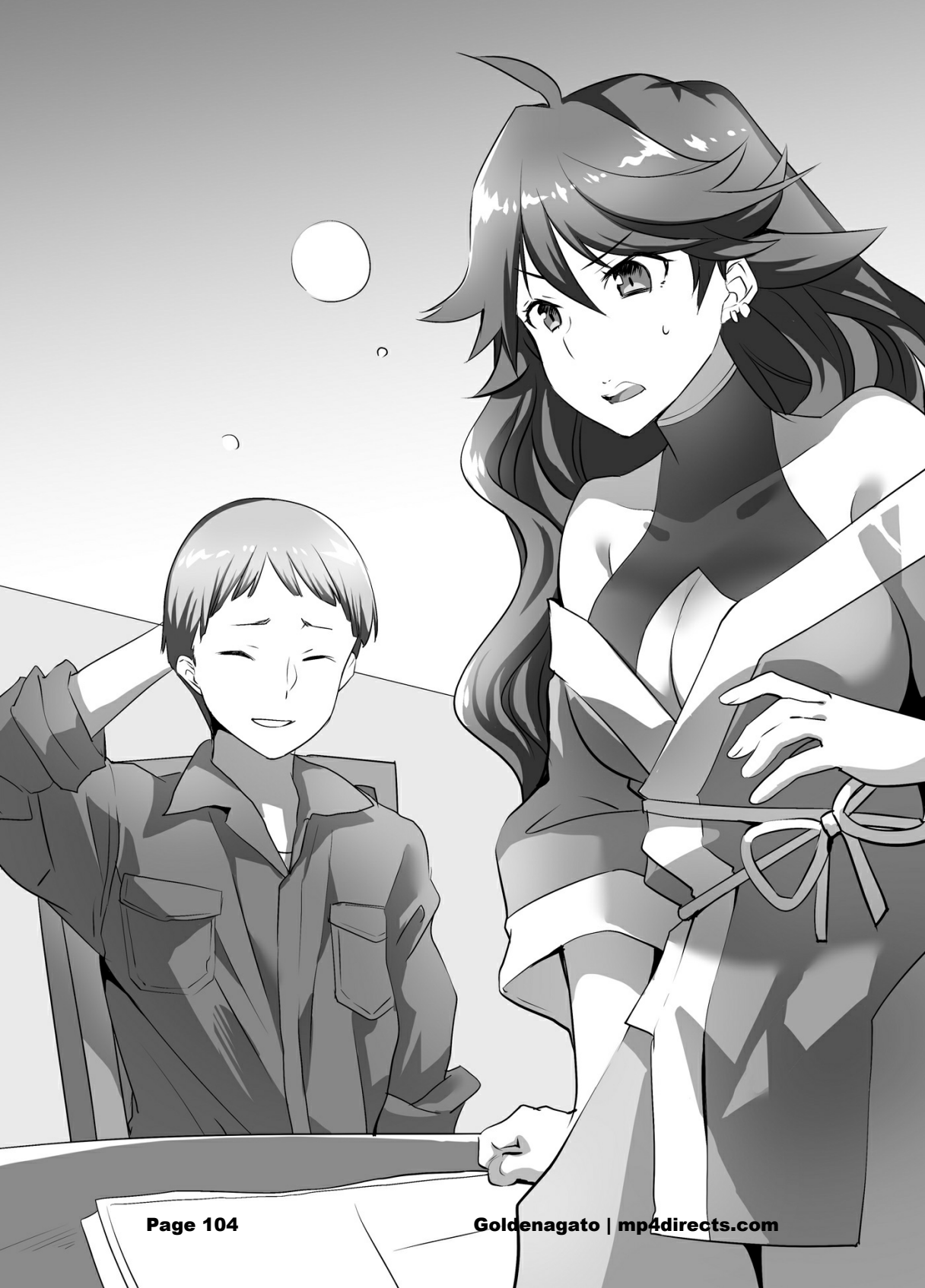
He was a god.

The criteria for determining godhood were rather vague. There were some general characteristics that gods shared, but the primary determining factor was being recognized by other gods. Hiruko noticed instantly that he was not only a god, but one stronger than herself.

"Why...Why are you here?!"

"That's a pretty aggressive greeting," Touichirou replied in a gentle voice. "You want to talk, right? Why don't you have a seat?"

"Sure..."



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Overwhelmed by her first impression of him, Hiruko did as she was told. “There’s a lot I want to ask you,” she began. “You picked me in the draft, so I thought you guys were the weakest faction here.”

“As far as strength in battle, we are. I’m pretty strong, and I feel like the other League Members are too, but we’re outnumbered. But hey, we have enough people to defend our territory.”

“With someone as strong as you, couldn’t you crush the humans yourself?” If a god like this fought against humans, he would annihilate them in an instant.

“You need humans to make things work in Belm. Take a look at this map.”

Touichirou spread a map of the continent out on the table. It was a simple map, showing a rough idea of where things were in relation to each other. It was divided up into hexagons by faint lines and looked like a hex map one would use in a board game.

“Seems pretty detailed.”

“These are the smallest units of territory in Belm. Each is a hexagon, ten kilometers long on each side. They’re all numbered, making a total of...well, there are a lot. The war is about taking these hexagons from each other.”

“So what?”

“There’s a limit to how many people can enter each area. We’re all given a cost based on how strong we are. The cost limit for an army in one territory is one thousand. Super strong beings like you and me are ‘L’ units with a cost of five hundred. Those who are fairly strong are ‘M’ units with a cost of one hundred, and those who are so weak they don’t matter are ‘S’ units with a cost of one. Basically, you can’t make an army out of L units.

“I have a few questions.”

“Ask away.”

“First, about those L units. You made it sound like you’ve got a bunch of them here. Aren’t you over the cost limit, then?”

“The home bases are special in that they have no cost limit. That makes attacking the home base of the other factions very difficult.”

“If there’s such a strict cost limit, shouldn’t you be able to go and crush their armies by yourself?”

“There are rules about taking territory,” Touichirou explained. “First, you can’t just enter territory owned by another faction.”

“How’re you supposed to have a war like that? There’s no way you could fight properly.”

“That’s where the second rule comes in. If you have two or more areas connecting to an enemy area, you can invade. Once you defeat their leader, you take control of the area. In other words, to hold an area, you need to always have a presence there.”

“Ah, that’s what you mean by being short on manpower.”

“Exactly. To invade an enemy area, we need to take multiple areas around it, and then we need to station people permanently in those areas to maintain control of them. No matter how strong I am, if we don’t have the numbers, they’ll just take back any territory we gain.”

“But the home bases are in the corners of the continent, right? Wouldn’t you be stuck if you got surrounded?”

“That’s another special case with home bases. You can invade any territory that connects to your home base.”

“All right, I got the rules. But aren’t you strong enough that you could just ignore them?”

“Maybe, but I have no intention of doing so. I’m perfectly happy with this place. I have no reason to attack anyone else or to destroy the system.”

“All right. This whole conversation was mostly pointless. I wanna head up to Himeln. Give me permission to go.”

“You can leave if you want, but you won’t be able to enter Himeln.”

“In other words, you don’t have any territory around there?”

“All we have is some land on the west side of the continent. Some guys got very motivated a long time ago and managed to carve out their own space there.”

“So basically, if I wanna go to Himeln, I have to conquer my way there?”

“That’s right.”

“Got it. Get me out of here, then. As far north as you can.”

“Our farthest territory north is 110:10, but the best we can do is teleport you to 125:17. We don’t have enough points to go any farther.”

“Even more jargon?! What are points?!”

“Points are obtained from mobs on the continent. Moving between areas costs points.”

Troops could be teleported between their home base and controlled territories in either direction, but doing so cost points depending on how far

away the destination was.

"Why the heck did someone make a system like this?" Hiruko asked after hearing his explanation. She couldn't understand why someone had set up such bizarre, roundabout rules.

"Who knows? I don't really care; I'm happy if I can just relax here."

"Fine. Send me as far as you can."

"Okay. For now, take this with you." Touichirou handed her a tube.

"What's this?"

"It's called a cylinder. If you stick it into a mob, you can collect energy from them. Filling one gives you one point."

"No idea what I'll need it for, but I guess I'll figure it out on the way."

"If there's anything you don't understand, feel free to ask any time. Anyone in the League can use telepathy. Do you need a map?"

"It's fine; seeing that one is enough."

In the top right was the Himeln home base, marked as 1:1. As she looked down the map, the tiles proceeded as 2:1, 3:1, and so on. All the way at the bottom was the Slow Life League's home base, 140:1.

From right to left the numbers increased from 1:2, to 1:3, and so on. It appeared the first number determined vertical position, while the second represented horizontal position. The home base of Momurus in the top left was at 1:230, and Suudoria Academy was in the bottom left at 140:230.

If Hiruko was being sent to 125:17, she wasn't making it that far from the Slow Life League's home base. Himeln was still rather far away, and she had no guarantee Luu would remain at her own home base. If Luu headed towards her, they would be able to reunite sooner. Hiruko had no idea what Luu would do, but for now she had nothing to do but set out after her.

"See you around."

As Touichirou said that, the scenery around Hiruko suddenly changed. She was now standing on a stone road in the middle of a grassland.

She immediately received a telepathic message.

Oh, I almost forgot. Most of the animals and plants in Belm are immortal, and if you touch them, even gods like us will get infected, so be careful."

"Tell me that at the start!"

"I don't go outside much, so I kind of forgot. I'm sure you can make a barrier for yourself."

"Of course I can!"

If she wanted to, she could create an infinite space between herself and the outside world. Hiruko swung her hand in a chopping motion. The shock wave it created sliced through the grass in front of her, but in moments, the grass was back to normal. The split blades immediately stitched themselves back together. It felt like she was being made fun of somehow.

She tried unleashing fire from her palm next, and in moments the entire field was up in flames. All that should have been left was scorched earth, but the incinerated grass immediately returned to normal, waving unnaturally like nothing had happened.

"The heck is this? Is it regeneration or some kind of time reversal? And for something like *grass*? Gross!"

Hiruko had met people who could regenerate in an instant or control time, but she had no idea why some grass would have the same ability.

"Whatever. Not like I'm going to touch it. I just need to go north."

She floated up into the air. She had no intention of slowly walking to her destination and quickly accelerated. She would be in the Slow Life League's territory for a while, so she intended to cross as much distance as possible all at once.

Instead, she ran into another wall.

"What the heck?! This is getting stupid!"

There was a translucent, pale wall in front of her. It stretched out to the right and left, as well as up into the sky.

"That's an area boundary. I told you that you need points to pass through them, right?"

"So I'm supposed to stick this cylinder into things to get points? Don't you have any?"

"I used all the points I had to teleport you, but either way, it's the unit moving that needs the points."

Hiruko looked at the device in her hand. It was used to absorb energy, and if full, would give her one point.

"What a pain in the ass. What's with this place?! It's so stupid!"

She inspected the wall to see if she could find another way through but found nothing. It seemed she would have to find a sacrifice to fill up the cylinder after all.

With no other options, Hiruko began searching for the mobs Touichirou had told her about.

Chapter 15 — Why Do You Always Go Right to Killing or Kidnapping? Why Not Talk Normally First?

“Even if I go out there, they’ll probably still come looking,” Scott said. “It seems they need more than one person.”

“If you’re immortal, can’t they get as much energy as they want from you? Why don’t they just collect more from those guys lying outside?”

“You’re awfully quick to say something so cruel, Takatou.”

“It takes some time to recover after energy has been taken from one of us. It seems they’re in a bit of a hurry, so they’ll probably search the whole city.”

The three of them discussed how to handle the soldiers. Though Yogiri wasn’t sure if it was lucky or not, the soldiers were advancing cautiously. They must have been on guard since there were fewer infected people lying around than usual.

“Is there a back door we can use to get out?”

“Yeah, if we can’t talk things through with them, it’s better to not meet them at all.”

“The back door is over here.” Scott pointed to a door opposite the entrance. The house was small enough that it would be hard to miss it. Careful not to be visible from outside, they tried to sneak their way to the back door when Yogiri felt killing intent aimed at them. It was like a shadow had fallen over the entire area. A precise attack would appear as a thin black line, so this kind of signal meant it was an area of effect attack.

“What happened? One of the soldiers suddenly collapsed,” Scott said with suspicion, looking out the window.

“Yeah, maybe they were trying to destroy the whole house?” Yogiri answered.

“What do you mean?”

“Oh, I guess I never explained my power to you. I can detect killing

intent, and can kill them before they kill me."

"You expect me to believe there's such an absurd power?"

"Right?! That's exactly what I thought!" Tomochika emphatically agreed.

Sneaking a look outside, they saw the soldiers were trying to help their fallen companion.

"Looks like we have no choice now. I'll go outside and try talking to them."

"Is there a point?" Tomochika asked.

"Probably not. But if we don't do anything, they'll probably keep trying to attack us and end up all dying." Yogiri didn't think it would accomplish much, but he couldn't help but hope they'd retreat if he spoke with them. Right now, they had no idea Yogiri existed. He'd feel guilty for killing all of them if they didn't even know what was happening.

Young man, if you go alone, will Tomochika be safe here?

"I'm just going outside, so she should be close enough."

No matter. Unless something incredible happens, my protection should be sufficient!

"Can you even do anything now, Mokomoko?" Yogiri asked. With Furemaru and Enju gone, all she could do was transmit electromagnetic waves, so it didn't seem like her protection would amount to much.

Guh... Well, in the worst case, I can possess Tomochika and control her myself...

"You can do that?!" Tomochika cried. "Actually, wait...you better not!"

"Who are you talking to?" Scott asked, confused.

"We're being haunted by a ghost, so we're talking to it," Yogiri explained.

"Oh, I see."

"You believed that awfully easily."

"It's far harder to believe that there's someone out there who can kill people infected by the Seyla. A ghost isn't that much of a stretch." It didn't seem like he doubted them, so he had likely believed everything Yogiri had told him.

"Okay, I'll head out for a bit. Oh, would it be easier if you came with me, Scott?"

"No, they don't think of us as anything more than a resource. I wouldn't be of any help to you."

“Oh, okay.” Yogiri stood up and stepped out of the house.

One of the soldiers immediately lifted his spear to throw it and collapsed. He must have thought Yogiri was one of the infected and so acted as normal. Of the five soldiers from Himeln, there were now only three survivors.

“Hold on! Listen to me!” At this rate, Yogiri leaving the house was just going to get the soldiers killed faster. He hurriedly tried to stop them. “I’m not infected by the Seyla. Don’t you have a way to see that?”

The soldiers met his gaze, then turned back to discuss amongst themselves.

“It’s true. He doesn’t have the eyes.”

“And he has no gear. Is he stronger than an M unit?”

“He’s not associated with any of the factions, so I can’t see his cost.”

“He has no stats either. He doesn’t even have the Gift.”

“So he’s just an idiot who came in from outside Belm?”

“But how did he get all the way here without being infected?”

“Maybe he was carried here in a box? That’s how most meat is transported.”

“I guess we need to capture him before he’s infected, then.”

“Should we report to the captain?”

“If we do that, she’ll just take it all for herself.”

“Right. Whether we eat him ourselves or sell him off, we should just split it between the three of us!”

It didn’t seem like they were all that dedicated to their cause. Ignoring the strangeness of the situation, they were just trying to get the most out of it for themselves. Yogiri and Tomochika had seen people like this too many times before, and Yogiri was starting to get sick of it.

“Just to warn you, your two friends died because of my power. I have the ability to detect killing intent and counterattack. That’s why your friends are dead. I doubt you’ll believe me right away, but I recommend you don’t try and attack me to find out.”

“What’s with this guy? Is he stupid?”

“I knew a guy like him once. When he was younger, he always screwed with people like this.”

“Let’s tie him up for now. He’ll be more valuable if we keep him alive.”

“But we can’t just take him back to the camp.”

“Right. Let’s hide him somewhere in the city, then we can take him to the

Neutral Zone next time we have a break."

"I warned you guys. If you get any closer, I'll kill you." As expected, they ignored him. Yogiri held out his right hand, pointing it at one of the soldiers.

"Come on, kid. If you're gonna bluff, you can do better—" The man collapsed as he started to approach.

"Wha?!"

"This is a technique of the Dannoura School. You can't even see it because it's a ball of...uhh, spirit?"

Having been convinced that Yogiri couldn't do anything to hurt them, the two soldiers panicked after seeing their friend suddenly die. It was a sight Yogiri had witnessed countless times.

"Man, Japan was so peaceful." When he was living in Japan, Yogiri was almost never attacked. He had a newfound appreciation for the stable society back home. "I'm sick of this. Why do you always go right to killing or kidnapping? Why not talk normally first?" He lifted his hand towards the two survivors.

"W-Wait! We get it! We'll stay back! That's what you want, right?!"

"What do you want from us?!"

"Nothing, really. Oh, you said there was a Neutral Zone, right? Where's that?"

"It's south of here—"

"What is happening over here?!" a voice called out from the sky, interrupting the soldier.

Yogiri looked up to see a huge, rotund person floating in the air. She was wearing a red dress and was likely a woman. She was holding a staff about the length of her body.

There was another girl, so small you might miss her next to the larger woman, floating at the woman in red's feet. She also had a staff and was wearing a green dress. Unlike the soldiers, they weren't covered in armor, so they must not have needed it. Yogiri recalled hearing that stronger people could make a barrier to protect themselves from the Seyla.

"Captain!"

"What happened to your regular report?! How long does it take to collect some points?!"

The soldiers were referring to the girl in green as their captain.

"H-Hold on! We just got attacked!"

“Then why didn’t you report it?!”

“B-Because it looked like an uninfected civilian...”

“Him, huh? More infected around will be a nuisance. Kill him!” The girl in green pointed her staff at Yogiri.

“H-He already killed three of us, though!”

“So he isn’t just a civilian? It’s fine, just kill him. If you disobey, you will be executed for insubordination.”

“Umm, but...” The soldiers were clearly at a loss, looking between Yogiri and the girl. If they approached Yogiri, they’d die, but if they did nothing, their captain would kill them. Caught between a rock and a hard place, they had no idea what to do.

In the end, they did nothing. They were absolutely certain they’d die if they approached Yogiri. If they hesitated, there might be some way they could avoid following their orders. That may have been what they were thinking.

But it didn’t seem the girl was quite so lenient.

“Die.” The girl pointed her staff at one of the soldiers. He was instantly ripped apart, sliced to pieces, armor and all, by some invisible blade.

The last remaining soldier screamed, running in a blind panic towards Yogiri. Just like he had warned him, Yogiri killed the soldier as he approached.

“Tch. What even are you?” The girl asked, turning an annoyed expression on him.

“That’s my line. Did you really need to kill them?”

“Disobeying orders is punishable by death.”

“I get the logic, but it doesn’t make sense if your commander is incompetent.”

A soldier who didn’t follow orders was useless and at worst could cause the whole battle line to collapse. Any army treated desertion and insubordination as grave crimes. Yogiri understood that, but they weren’t in a situation where they were struggling for the life of their country. They had just been ordered to die for nothing, and he had no idea why.

“I care not for your nonsense. Uncertain variables are no more than a hassle. Die.” The moment she said that, the girl fell, making a small thud as she struck the ground. It seemed she was as light as she looked.

She must have tried to do something. It had been so fast that Yogiri hadn’t

even noticed the killing intent. But it made no difference whether he perceived it or not. His power would activate automatically to kill any threat to his life.

"Princess!" The enormous woman in red dropped to the ground, picking up the girl in her arms. "Headquarters! Teleport! Hurry!" The woman paid no mind to Yogiri.

And then she was gone.

"Looks like we're getting wrapped up in something dumb as always, huh?" Yogiri commented to himself.

"I was watching from the house, but...looks like you ended up killing them all anyway." Tomochika sighed, stepping up to Yogiri's side.

"I don't think there was much I could do. If their boss had attacked me from the start, it might have ended differently."

Either way, at that point there were only two of them remaining.

"Everyone who picks a fight with us ends up dying, so we still don't know who they are or what they want..." Reluctantly, Tomochika was getting used to it. It didn't seem like she was concerned about their enemies dying. Yogiri couldn't say that she *had* to feel more concerned, but he felt like it would be better if she were.

"It's kind of a pain if they can teleport. They might show up in front of us at any time."

"No, if they are teleporting through the protocol, they can only appear in the center of the area. It isn't very convenient," Scott answered Yogiri's concern, stepping out of the house himself.

"Protocol?"

"You can think of it like the rules for the continent."

Scott gave them a brief explanation of the protocol. Belm was divided into hexagonal territories, and the four factions fought for control of them. Moving between areas cost energy, and you could teleport between your home base and the territories you controlled. The system of rules that governed the war on this continent was called the protocol.

"So it's like a kind of strategy game?"

"Seems that way. I wonder if this was all set up by the Sage?"

"Now then, I believe I've more or less explained everything to you. Would you consider killing those who wish to die now?" Scott asked. That was the original point of their conversation.

“Do you guys believe in souls or reincarnation or anything?” Yogiri asked.

“Hmm. Even if our bodies are annihilated, when we revive, we retain our memories. I guess I attributed that to something like a soul.”

“If I use my power on you, your soul will probably be totally erased. I’m wondering if you’re okay with that.”

Scott thought for a moment. “I guess you’d have to ask each individual. There may be some out there who believe dying here would allow them to be reborn and start life anew somewhere else...”

“Then please ask them. Let’s go, Dannoura.”

“Huh? Go where?”

“That soldier said the Neutral Zone was south of here. That’s probably our best bet for getting information.” Yogiri started walking out of the city.

“Hold on. Are you not going to grant our request?” Scott asked.

“We don’t have time to wait around, but you need some time to think about it, right?”

“If we come to a conclusion, where should we meet you?”

“You’ll have to figure that out on your own.” Yogiri had no intention of sticking around for that long. If they wanted to die so badly, they could come find him. He wasn’t interested in proactively working to kill people who weren’t his enemies.

“Hey, are you sure we can walk away like this?”

“To be honest...it’s too much of a pain.”

“Hey!”

“If they want to kill themselves, they should do it on their own.”

“I mean...I understand the situation, but if they *ask* you to kill them...”

“If they really want to die that badly, they can find me and attack me.”

As they stepped out of the city, Yogiri turned around. Scott wasn’t following them. Yogiri had been worried he would keep trying to pressure him.

There was a road leading directly south of the city, so they began walking down it.

Chapter 16 — Looks Like I Have to Be the Demon Lord After All

Faisel was apparently a Demon Lord. “Apparently,” because she didn’t really feel that way herself.

The current Demon Lord was supposed to be Tesla, but the adults who tended to her insisted that she was the rightful Demon Lord. Tesla was the daughter of the previous Demon Lord. As such, Faisel figured it made sense that she had inherited the title, but not everyone accepted her.

Faisel possessed an incredible level of magical potential. Never mind Tesla—she far surpassed even the previous Demon Lord. Among demonkind, might made right. Faisel had been taught that the strongest person became the Demon Lord.

Being only eight years old, she didn’t really understand the situation too well. At this point, Tesla was certainly stronger than her, so she thought it was fine to let Tesla be the Demon Lord. When Faisel grew stronger, she could then think about switching places. But the adults around her didn’t seem to agree. They were plotting to set up Faisel as the Demon Lord immediately.

Faisel didn’t really care who the Demon Lord was. She wanted everyone to get along, not squabble over petty titles. She didn’t mind that Tesla was the Demon Lord and had no aspirations of taking on the role herself. She just wanted to go home, but instead she had been locked up in this tower for a long time.

She didn’t feel that was an appropriate way to treat a Demon Lord, but it was for her own protection. There were an unusually large number of people trying to assassinate her. Both those who supported the current Demon Lord and those who sought to topple her saw Faisel as a threat. But spending every day locked away, barred from meeting almost anyone, made life boring.

Looking down from the top of the tower, she could see a lively city under Tesla’s rule beneath her, making her wonder why she was locked up there.

Faisel was the daughter of a blacksmith. For their kingdom, constantly in a state of war, the demand for arms was robust, giving her family a certain measure of influence. She had lived wanting for nothing.

Then the three demon generals had come, the leaders directly under the Demon Lord. They had taken Faisel away. Hierarchical relations were absolute in demonic society, so buying a child off her parents wasn't an especially tall order.

Now that she had been placed in this situation, she didn't have much to do. She had been given plenty of toys and books but had grown tired of them quickly. Playing by yourself was just dull.

Things had remained the same for half a year after she had been brought there. Then suddenly, people stopped coming. The three demon generals pretended to be loyal to Tesla while working in the shadows to topple her, but they had stopped visiting Faisel. Things outside seemed to become hectic, and soon after, food stopped being delivered to her. That made things extremely dangerous.

She wasn't too worried, though. All she thought was that things had gotten awfully quiet. Though she enjoyed the food, she didn't need it to survive. She would get hungry but could just put the hunger out of her mind and be done with it.

She didn't think it was all that strange until a week had passed without eating or drinking anything. Demons were more resilient than humans, but only to an extent. So Faisel decided to try going outside.

She first tried the door, but it was locked. She hadn't expected it to be that easy, but when she began to jiggle the doorknob, the whole door fell out of the frame. It was surprisingly fragile.

Outside the room was a staircase. The spiral descended to another door, which opened with only a little effort despite its lock. She had broken the lock by doing so, but this was an emergency, so she had no choice. Outside that door was a hallway. She recalled the time she had been brought to the tower, which was part of a larger mansion.

"I need to find someone..."

Walking down the hallway, she opened a nearby door and peered inside. Someone was lying on the floor inside. They didn't respond to Faisel's touch. They felt cold, and it looked like they had started to rot.

"What happened?" She checked the other rooms, but they were all the

same. A number of people were dead in each of them. She obviously had no experience with autopsies, but it seemed like some time had passed since they'd died. There didn't seem to be anyone left alive in the mansion, so for the first time in a long time, she stepped outside.

There, she found more bodies. People had collapsed all over the streets, clearly dead at a glance.

"I guess I'll go home, then!"

There was no one who could get upset with her now. She was free to go wherever she wanted. Heading through the high class residential district into the shopping district, she noticed that people seemed different. Everyone else had been dead without any sign of injuries. Here, the bodies were all clearly wounded. Many buildings were damaged, and the bodies were armed. There were more than just horned demons lying in the streets.

It seemed humans had attacked. Worried about her family, she headed to the workshop district. Things were the same there. Humans and demons lay everywhere, signs of fighting all around them.

With a bit of difficulty, she made it over the bodies and to her own home. Both the first floor workshop and the second floor residence were empty. She had to assume they had been evacuated. But Faisel had no idea where to go next.

"Maybe there's someone alive somewhere."

She thought over her options. Humans and demons were mortal enemies. In general, demons were stronger, but the fact that the humans had made it to the center of their territory meant they had a significant amount of fighting strength as well. So what was their objective? They were likely after the Demon Lord.

With that thought in mind, Faisel headed to the Demon Lord's castle. Normally, one had to conquer the castle to win the fight, so she imagined the humans had gone there. The castle was at the north end of the city. As she headed there, she finally came across some living people walking around outside it.

"What? There's a girl!"

"She has horns! She's a demon!"

Human soldiers were standing around the castle. Faisel hesitated. Humans were enemies, so she shouldn't get any closer. But they were likely the only ones who knew what had happened in the city.

Before she could decide what to do, an arrow came flying. It struck her in the shoulder, sending her tumbling backwards.

"Kill the demons!"

"Don't let up! Finish her off!"

A rain of arrows descended on her, accompanied by bolts of fire, ice, and lightning. She thought it was a pretty mean way to treat a young girl, but she then remembered that humans and demons had to kill each other on sight.

"Oh, that's right. I need to kill them."

Faisel stood back up under the hail of arrows and magic. The first attack had taken her by surprise and knocked her over, but now that she knew they were coming she could bear the attacks fairly well. She was getting filled with so many arrows that she was starting to look like a hedgehog, but pulling each of them out one at a time was too much work, so she started walking towards the humans as she did.

"The barrier won't hold!"

"Dammit! Is she the one giving off the miasma throughout the city?!"

As Faisel approached the castle, something around the structure burst. That must have been the barrier the humans were talking about.

She moved to attack but never got the chance. The humans suddenly started screaming in pain, dropping to the ground and eventually falling silent.

"Oh, okay. Maybe everyone around the tower died because of me?" As she thought that, she realized a power was flowing out from her body. "I don't really get it, but they took the castle, didn't they?"

In that case, she needed to take it back. Pulling the arrows out of her body one at a time, she made her way into the castle.

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The machine known as the Hedgehog in this world had scattered into pieces and fled. In order to maximize the possibility of escape, it had split itself into the smallest pieces possible and fled in every direction. It was likely that it wouldn't be able to retrieve all of its parts after doing that, but it didn't care. In truth, reconstructing its core processor only required about a third of the material that made up its whole body. Its combat prowess would be severely hampered, but there was no other way to achieve its objective.

It began to think. It had found the goddess it was looking for, but it couldn't match the goddess's guardian. It couldn't beat her at full strength, so how would it do anything in this situation? If it couldn't win now, it needed to find another way.

It quickly gave up on retrieving its lost parts. It would take too much time, and even if it succeeded at finding all of them, it still wouldn't be able to win. Instead, it began plans to strengthen itself. It began calculating what resources it would need in order to obtain power that exceeded the goddess's and her offspring's. Of course, there was no guarantee it could obtain everything it needed, so it would need to modify its plan based on what it could get its hands on.

It activated its sensors at maximum strength. Until now it had used them only to search for traces of the goddess, but this was different. It didn't care what it found; it just wanted anything that could help it become stronger.

Its sensors picked up an enormous power. It didn't know what that power was; it knew only that it had suddenly appeared.

It made a beeline straight for it.

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Faisel crossed over the moat, wrenched open the gate, and made her way into the castle. Most of the soldiers died as she approached. She wasn't doing anything in particular to them. It seemed to be a side effect of her natural aura. If she tried, she could probably suppress it, but she made no effort to. There were only humans here, so there was no point in sparing them.

"I've never been to the castle before, and I don't know where the humans are hiding. Okay, I'll just release some more power!"

When humans came into contact with the mysterious aura she exuded, they died. If she intentionally strengthened it and spread it throughout the castle, she wouldn't have to hunt down each of the humans individually.

"Haaaaaah!"

She didn't really know how to do it, so she just flexed her whole body. When her arms started shaking from the strain, she felt like the power flowing out of her got a little stronger. It definitely looked like the aura around her had grown more forceful.

She then noticed there was a place her power wasn't reaching. There was

likely something there, so she headed towards it.

Her search led her to a storage room. Supplies had been piled inside, and she could feel an unpleasant presence coming from the doorway. It seemed to be some kind of barrier, preventing her aura from entering.

There were four people inside: a man with a sword, a woman with a staff, a woman with a bow, and a woman in priest's robes. It reminded her of the parties of heroes she had heard rumors about. The Demon Lords had a history of selecting four particularly powerful humans and tormenting them as a group.

"Did the heroes beat the Demon Lord?" If so, that would explain the situation in the city. The Demon Lord's army had lost to the heroes. "Then what should I do? If the three demon generals are dead, I'm just a blacksmith's daughter again."

With no backing, there was no way Faisel could claim the title of Demon Lord. But if she was just the daughter of a blacksmith, she didn't really feel like it was her place to take revenge for the Demon Lord.

"Rimlette, the barrier's gonna hold, right?!"

"It doesn't look like it. I might have to shrink it to only protect myself."

"Why?!" the swordsman yelled at the mage.

"You're a hero! Do something about it yourself. I'm not that good at barriers."

"Then...Anne! You're a priest; shouldn't you be able to make some kind of barrier?!"

"Uhh, I'm only here because High Priest Mimir is gone."

The humans seemed to be getting frantic and were acting pretty silly. They didn't seem all that strong, so Faisel thought she might be able to beat them.

She decided to take revenge after all. Perhaps she would lose in the end, but she didn't really mind. It was more concerning that everyone she knew had died and she alone was left alive.

She stepped into the storage room, and the barrier protecting it burst, letting Faisel's aura flood in. The woman with the bow and the priest immediately collapsed. The mage's body was wrapped in some kind of light, which was likely protecting her. The swordsman's white armor seemed to be able to defend against her aura as well.

"What the hell?! The Demon Lord is dead! Wasn't this supposed to be

easy?!”

“Yes, it was. With the three demon generals dead, this was our best chance.”

“Umm, can I ask a question?” Faisel called out to the mage.

“What?”

“Are the Demon Lord and the three demon generals all dead?”

“Uh...yes. Demon Lord Tesla, Demon General Oryphes, and Demon General Exia are dead. High Priest Mimir was apparently a demon general, but she’s missing.” For some reason, the mage answered honestly. Maybe she was just trying to buy time.

“Looks like I have to be the Demon Lord after all.” Judging from her short walk through the city, it didn’t seem like there were any survivors. If she was the last one alive, she would have to be the leader.

Faisel made up her mind, but it was the last thing she ever thought. The wall beside her suddenly burst as something punched through it and into her head.

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It was looking for power. Power it didn’t possess. Power that could defeat the offspring of a god. Soaring over the ocean, it ran in a straight line, ignoring any trivial obstacles like buildings in its path.

Reaching the source of that power, it immediately buried its arm blade in her skull. Luckily, she was just a being with latent power. She didn’t know how to efficiently use it, only letting it leak out into the air around her. Though it reduced its combat ability significantly, penetrating her exterior and entering her body was no difficulty. She had no way of defending herself.

It burrowed into her head through the hole it had opened up, taking control of her body. Fusing with her flesh, it began to modify her to best bring out her latent power. Then it fused with her brain, searching her memories for any knowledge of how to become even stronger.

It had found a new power. The power of the strongest Demon Lord in history.

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Rimlette watched the scene in front of her dumbly. She couldn't follow what had happened.

The most terrifying Demon Lord ever had appeared in front of them in the form of a young girl, easily destroying the barrier she had set up, but then the wall beside her had exploded and she had collapsed.

Her fallen body began convulsing violently. Rimlette prayed that she would die, but it seemed no one heard her prayers, as after a time the girl jerked back to her feet. Meeting the girl's gaze, the ominous light in her eyes almost made Rimlette faint.

Demon Lord Tesla was nothing compared to this. She understood in an instant that this was the true Demon Lord and immediately fell into despair.

If that was all that had happened, she would have had no problem understanding. She had witnessed the advent of the greatest Demon Lord in history, and humanity no longer had a chance. There was nothing left to do but despair, but Rimlette could at least accept that fact as it was. However, what happened next sent her mind reeling all over again.

"UEG Crash!"

Someone came down through the ceiling, striking the demon girl directly. It was another young girl. Wearing a white robe, she had trampled over the Demon Lord. The more she thought about it, the more unnatural this whole situation seemed to Rimlette. The demon girl's head had been pulverized, crushed into a fine paste. While that might have been possible if the other girl had fallen on her with that much force, the ground beneath her wasn't so much as scratched.

"Good! A swift victory! Ah, do not think I can only win with a surprise attack like this! That thing was only a machine, so it would not give me any sort of interesting reaction. In short, such a thing had no right to stand before me!"

"Uh, so, you mean it's dead?" Rimlette blurted.

"Precisely. I have thoroughly destroyed its core. With no backup, it will never move again!"

The violently toxic miasma that had been emitting from the demon girl had stopped. Even if she was still alive, she wasn't a threat anymore.

"Uhh...thank you?" Unsure of what to do, Rimlette finally settled on giving her thanks.

"Oh-ho, I thought you would be totally lost in this situation, but to think

you still have the presence of mind to offer thanks. Very well! I shall end your life myself. Normally, I would leave someone as pathetic as you to my subordinates, but us meeting like this must be some sort of fate. Accept this gift with gratitude!"

"Umm, what are you talking about?" Rimlette couldn't follow what the girl was saying.

"I am the Ultimate Extermination God, the UEG. I have come to exterminate all intelligent life in this world. Naturally, that means you must die as well."

"Huh?"

The UEG had found a sword at some point. She had nowhere on her she could hide something so large, yet it looked like it had just appeared in her hand.

"Why not attempt to offer some resistance? It is rare for me to spend my precious time on weaklings like you. So go ahead and struggle!"

"Like hell! Don't think you can get away with anything you want just 'cause you're a kid!" Apparently not understanding the situation, the swordsman brought his sword up and pointed it at the girl. She replied by swinging her own sword, and the hero dropped to the ground, split evenly in two. The holy armor he had been wearing hadn't so much as slowed the UEG down.

Rimlette dropped her staff. She completely lost the will to fight back.

Chapter 17 — Whenever He Is in a Difficult Situation, a God Appears to Help Him

"Nina!" Seeing his sister limp, Gerhardt began to panic. She was motionless in the mage soldier Marino's arms. He had never imagined something like this would happen.

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As an M unit, she shouldn't have been that easy to kill. Against an L unit, most M units would likely lose, but Nina was different. Nina had the unique skill Perfect Evasion. She could avoid any attack. Of course that wouldn't be enough to defeat a truly strong opponent, but it should have been enough for her to escape with her life. So he hadn't been even slightly worried about the thought of sending his adorable little sister out.

But now she lay motionless. He couldn't believe his eyes. He couldn't accept the obvious truth of the situation.

"What the hell happened?! No, that's not important! We need to help her!"

The mages standing by around them ran up to her. This was the teleportation chamber of Himeln's home base, where anyone who teleported into the area through the protocol would be placed. They could have left it as an open field, but feeling that was a bit too bleak, they had constructed a room around it.

At Marino's urgent request, they had been teleported there. Since it was an emergency, mages with healing and resurrection magic had been gathered.

A warm light coming from the healers' hands wrapped around Nina, but she still didn't move.

"Uhh...she's already..." the healer said apologetically.

"Dammit! Then use resurrection!" It was a different school of magic than healing, but there was resurrection magic in this world. If used within a certain amount of time after death, a person could be resurrected, depending on the severity of their injuries.

"It's no good! I can't resurrect her!"

"I don't care! Keep trying! Call for backup! We absolutely have to bring her back!"

"I-It's no good. We can't do anything..."

"Where is Childa?!"

"On the battlefield. Momurus dispatched an L unit, so if Lady Childa returns, the battle line will likely crumble—"

"Who cares?! That doesn't matter! I'll take back as much territory as you want later! Childa! You can hear me, can't you?!"

"My my. Contacting me without going through Communications is against the rules, isn't it?"

Members of the same faction could communicate with each other via

telepathy as long as they were within their own territory. However, it would be hard to keep things under control if everyone was using it at random. That could be a fatal weakness, especially on the battlefield. For that reason, Himeln had set up rules to govern communication. There was a department specialized in telepathic communications, and any long distance communication had to be done through them.

"Who cares about that now?! Punish me later if you want! I'm warping you back!"

"You realize how big a deal it is to be pulling me out, right?"

The placement of forces was determined by the War Room. Even royalty like Gerhardt was forbidden from moving forces around at his own discretion.

"I know! I'll take full responsibility!"

"Fine, fine. You better be ready for what happens, though."

The telepathy cut off. Gerhardt teleported her. As an L unit, he had the ability to operate their teleportation system and could send people back and forth from their home base. The points they had stored in the home base decreased, and in the center of the teleportation chamber a woman in a tight white robe appeared.

Her name was Childa. She was an L unit like Gerhardt, and someone who might be able to save Nina.

"So, how long has Nina been like this?" Childa asked, stepping closer to Marino.

"It hasn't even been thirty minutes yet. Your power should still work!" Gerhardt pleaded desperately.

"Hmmm. I guess I'll give it a shot." Childa's class was Time Master. She could manipulate time within a given space. She could restore broken objects to perfect condition and bring dead things back to life.

"This could get complicated, so could you lay her on the ground?"

Marino did as she was told, laying Nina on the floor. Childa's power operated on a given space. Anyone nearby would also be caught up in the effect. From a few steps away, Childa lifted a hand towards the fallen girl and activated her power. A blinding light filled the air around Nina, winking out after a few seconds.

But nothing had changed.

"What happened?"

“Well, that is odd.” Childa tilted her head in confusion.

“I asked what happened! It doesn’t look like she’s alive!”

“Because she isn’t. I rewound her time by an hour. Are you sure she just died?”

“Marino! What’s going on! You aren’t trying to trick us, are you?!” Gerhardt cried, rounding on the other woman.

“A-Absolutely not! I requested the teleport the moment Princess Nina collapsed! It hasn’t even been ten minutes since then!”

“Childa!”

“No need for the scary face. I did everything I could.”

“You bitch! How can you be so flippant in a situation like this?!”

“What’s wrong? Things are awfully noisy in here.” As Gerhardt stepped up to Childa, the door to the teleportation chamber opened. A woman in a white dress entered: the queen of Himeln, Elisabelle. Behind her was her new friend, the young girl named Luu. She was wearing an incredibly luxurious dress. Elisabelle must have forced her to.

“Nina is dead! There’s no way I could be quiet!” Gerhardt answered.

“Is that why you called Childa back? Losing an M unit hurts, so I can’t blame you.” Elisabelle stepped up to Nina, peering into her face. “She looks like she’s still dead. Why are you all just standing around?”

“The thing about that, my queen, is that I rewound her time by an hour but she didn’t come back to life.” Childa replied, clinging to Elisabelle. Her uncaring attitude stoked Gerhardt’s anger.

“Is that so? Then I guess there is nothing we can do.”

Gerhardt took a moment to understand what she was saying. “You... What did you just say?”

“Hey, that’s no way to talk to your mother,” Elisabelle said.

“Your daughter is dead! Do you not care about that?!”

From the outside, it was hard to understand the scene. Everyone here seemed to be young enough that it was hard to call them adults.

“But for some reason, Childa’s power had no effect, correct? In that case, having her continue trying is a waste of her power.”

“What the hell is your problem?!”

“Gerhardt, I do not disagree with your efforts to try and revive Nina. However, we cannot waste Childa’s power anymore. You understand, right?” Elisabelle said sharply.

It was hard for Gerhardt to argue with her when she stayed so calm and collected. Childa's power had a limit. The further back she rewound time, the more her power diminished. A single hour wasn't such a big deal, but he couldn't say the same if she tried rewinding multiple hours or days. It was easy enough to tell her to try anyway, but considering the consequences, it was far too reckless.

"But anyway, who cares about Nina? We have Luu now." Elisabelle added.

"What?"

"Nina was quite pretty but intimidating. It made it seem like she didn't have much in the way of future prospects. But Luu here is perfect!"

Gerhardt's anger exploded.

"Ah! Gerhardt's angry!" Elisabelle hurried out of the room, pulling Luu along behind her.

"Umm...I think you were far too cruel there, Elisabelle. I think I better leave..." Full of excuses, Childa took her leave.

Meanwhile, Gerhardt was slamming his fist into the wall.

"Dammit! Dammit, dammit! What the hell is going on?! This is all wrong! Nina is dead?! Why did this happen?!"

"Sir Gerhardt..." Marino's expression was grave. She may have been the only one who understood his feelings.

"Marino, who killed her?"

"A young man who didn't belong to any faction. The princess tried to kill him, and he attacked her back..."

"Where?"

"Area 70:230. In the central west side. Very close to the Neutral Zone. You don't plan on going there yourself, do you?!"

"I do. Before someone gets in my way." As an L unit, Gerhardt had the ability to teleport himself between areas. However, that was a right that had been given to him by the queen, so she also had the power to strip it from him. Gerhardt had lost his composure, and he was beyond trying to hide it. He had no idea when his teleportation rights would be revoked, so he had to move while he still could.

"Marino, will you guide me?"

"Yes. I will accompany you."

The two of them teleported away.

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After having absorbed so many Philosopher's Stones, Luu had regained a large portion of her power. She wasn't particularly suited to fighting, but she wouldn't lose to some random humans.

Or at least that's what she had thought, but her confidence had been shaken after seeing the L units of Himeln. They seemed unbeatable. They looked like humans, but their power felt more like a god's.

In short, she couldn't force her way out of here. The best she could do was wait to be deployed to the battlefield, but for some reason, the queen Elisabelle had fallen for her and had no intention of sending her away from the home base. Luu had been categorized as an L unit, but the queen had no plan to use her to fight and instead treated her more like a doll to dress up. If she disobeyed, her freedom would be further restricted, so for now she just did what she was told, but she wouldn't be able to put up with the situation for long.

Luu wanted to find Yogiri. But there was nothing she could do to accomplish that. She was helpless.

"Gerhardt is such a handful. I think he's a bit too obsessed with his sister. What about you, Luu?"

"Isn't it hard to see one of your friends die?"

She was walking around with the queen, though she didn't know why the queen had taken such an interest in her. They were taking a walk through one of the castle's inner gardens.

"But she's just an M unit. We can just make a new one. Gerhardt is too focused on her. He has plenty of other sisters."

"He does?"

"Yes. I have no idea what power they'll be born with, so I just had to keep trying. Nina was a success, so maybe that's why Gerhardt was so taken with her."

"Is Gerhardt also one of your kids?" It didn't look to her like Elisabelle and Gerhardt were that far apart in age. Not that Luu had any grounds to complain, considering how her own appearance contrasted with her age.

"Yes, he is. He was a great success. He ended up as an L unit. His Class is the Greatest Warrior, Raised by the Gods."

“I thought it was a bit strange, but did he have that class when he was born?”

The Battle Song system that was interwoven with the world gave enormous power to certain individuals. That power was known as the Gift, and it manifested as various Classes. Normally a Class was given to someone by a person with a higher rank in the same Class. If a parent had the Gift, their child would inherit it, so it wasn’t that strange for someone to possess the Gift from birth. However, Luu thought having the Class of a warrior raised by the gods from birth was pretty strange.

“Isn’t it? I thought so too at first, but the reason is quite simple. Beings calling themselves gods appeared out of nowhere to raise him. It did not take much effort on my part. Well, he was a prince from the beginning, so would have been given to a wet nurse anyway. There would not have been much for me to do in either case.”

“Huh. Is he that strong?”

“Of course. Naturally he surpassed the level cap for humans. Anything he tries his hand at, he immediately becomes a master at. Everything he does makes his level increase, and with it, his stats. He has been blessed beyond compare by the gods, and whenever he is in a difficult situation, a god appears to help him. He can see through any enemy’s weaknesses, and against an enemy with none, he can give them a weakness.”

“That sounds ridiculous. If he’s that strong, why couldn’t he save his sister?” Luu recalled how panicked he had been. The mixture of sadness, anger, and confusion was almost humorous. It was hard for her to see him as a powerful warrior.

“He would have been fine if he was the one who had died. His power is specialized for combat. Apparently the gods don’t have much interest in him as a person, so they would feel no need to intervene just because his sister died, no matter how sad it made him.”

Is that so? Luu thought. She would use her power to help Yogiri as much as she could, but if someone like Tomochika dying made him sad, she doubted she’d bring her back to life.

“If he’s that strong, couldn’t he beat anyone?”

“The enemy L units all have similar powers. It is very rare for L units to claim a decisive victory over each other.”

“Your Majesty!” As they were speaking, a man in light armor ran up to

their side.

“My, what is the matter?”

“Sir Gerhardt has, uhh, left seeking revenge—”

“Oh, really? I thought he might do something like that. I’ll hardly praise him for such behavior, but it is no issue if he leaves for a short time, is it?” Elisabelle answered him, as if to chide the soldier for interrupting their walk for something so trivial.

“Umm, after he teleported out, we lost track of his signal! It is difficult to believe, but it seems he has perished...”

“What?”

Elisabelle gaped at the soldier, unable to believe the report she was being given.

Chapter 18 — Why Not Leave Half the Population Alive? That Should Help Spread Your Name

After destroying the bizarre “fusion of a machine from another world and a local person,” the UEG finished by mopping up the leftover humans in her surroundings.

“Hmm. I was looking for a place to use as a home base. I suppose this will do.” She had leaped in without much thought, so she didn’t really know where she was going, but it appeared she had ended up in some sort of castle. There was no need for her to rest her body, and she could go basically anywhere instantly, but wandering around without a clear base seemed lame somehow.

The UEG walked through the castle, looking for a place to relax, and found a chapel.

“This shall suffice.”

It was a beautiful white room covered in gorgeous windows to allow a large amount of light in. Great effort had been put into building it, giving it a peaceful air. The UEG sat down on the altar at the far end of the room.

“Now then, let us hear a report of the current situation. Assemble!”

The UEG called her subordinates. There was no real need to do so if she only wanted a report, and if she really wanted to know something, she could find out anything about this world on her own, but she would never do something so boorish. Though it would take some time and effort this way, for a god who could do anything easily, going through the motions like this was enjoyable.

The air in front of the UEG began to glow with a strong light, which eventually receded to show six kneeling figures.

“Hm? There seem to be more of you than I remember.” She knew Zakuro, the god who had been looking for her, and his two subordinates, Haruto and

Euphemia, but there were now three more girls with them.

“Lady UEG, I have added them to our ranks at my discretion. I believe they may prove useful in wiping out humanity.” Euphemia introduced the new members: Risley, Carol S. Lane, and Ryouko Ninomiya.

“If that is what you wish, I do not mind. However, I cannot allow you to continue adding to our ranks ad nauseam.” She knew Euphemia may have thought some of humanity could be rescued by making them into allies. With these kinds of numbers, it wasn’t much of an issue; however, were she to continue adding members to their group non-stop, things would be different.

“Oh?! Why is Ootori here?” Carol looked over at Haruto in surprise.

“I should be asking you that,” he replied.

“Are you two already acquainted?” the UEG asked.

“Yes. We knew each other before coming to this world.” Haruto gave a brief explanation of their circumstances—how they had been summoned to this world by a Sage as a class.

“Hmm...I suppose those who were summoned here recently from another world can be exempted from my extermination.” She had planned on killing them all in the end, but she ended up changing her mind, deciding that they were too far removed from her desire for revenge. “Anyway, we have been sidetracked. Give me a report. Zakuro, what results have you had?”

“I destroyed a city. But do we really have to declare ourselves to everyone we kill? It takes an awful lot of time,” he answered. The UEG had ordered that they explain their reasons for killing people before doing so. The denizens of this world had all been complicit in her imprisonment. She had ordered that they be made aware of that sin before dying, though she herself didn’t adhere to the rule so strictly.

“Of course it is necessary. Merely killing them would mean nothing. If they are unaware of their sin, there is no point in taking their lives.”

“Understood. I will continue the extermination as-is, then.”

“I have also eliminated only a single city,” Euphemia reported next. “I made a declaration to the city at large, but is such a method acceptable?”

“I suppose there is no problem with that.”

“If I knew that was allowed, I would have done the same thing. Why didn’t you say that earlier?” It seemed Zakuro had explained things to each individual personally before killing them.

“I have a suggestion,” Euphemia continued. “Why not leave half the

population alive? That should help spread your name."

"Hmm...that does sound like a good idea. It should allow more time for fear to permeate the population. Very well, I will allow it. But half is still too many. When attacking a city, you are only to spare one third of the population. That should be sufficient to spread my name."

"Understood."

"Then next, Haruto."

"I've been focused on wiping out secluded settlements in the woods. I've killed a few hundred people in total."

"Is that all? Actually, that is fine. If we ended up with only small settlements at the end, finishing the job would become a chore. Continue as you were." The UEG was satisfied with how things were going so far. "I shall continue participating in places that strike my interest. Continue with the systematic extermination of everything else." After saying that, she returned her followers to where she had summoned them from.

"Now, where should I head next?" The UEG spread out the net of her consciousness, searching for the presences of those who were particularly strong. "No one who stands out..." Despite searching the entire world, there didn't appear to be anyone of significant strength left.

"I suppose I will need to sharpen the scope." By reducing the range of her search, she could increase the detail with which she was able to see and thus garner more precise information. As she did, she noticed that something seemed a little off. There were places that gave her almost no information at all. It seemed they were built to conceal whatever they contained. If she was only glancing over them, she wouldn't have noticed, but now that she was consciously aware of them, scanning them wouldn't be a challenge.

She restricted her search to those suspicious regions. They had powerful barriers protecting them in addition to their concealment, but that was hardly an impediment for her. No barrier would be able to resist her strength. Once she made it through, she was met with a shock. The amount of power tightly packed within was incredible. That alone wasn't terribly surprising, but the fact the power had a connection to the UEG herself was.

"Hmmmm? What is happening there? My memories of the time leading up to my imprisonment are still rather vague. Did I leave something behind? No matter. I have already decided to wipe out all life. Hiding will not be enough to save you!"

The UEG searched through the contents behind the barrier. There were a number of powerful people inside. Plenty of beings more powerful than the Divine King and the bizarre machine she had just destroyed were wandering about there.

"I suppose it matters not whom I choose first." She couldn't get a good grasp on precisely how strong they were with a brief glance. She would eventually kill them all, so it didn't matter what order she killed them in.

Deciding that, she picked one at random and headed out.

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After passing through the barrier, the UEG was greeted by a rural landscape. She walked along a path leading between the fields. She could have appeared immediately beside her target, but that wouldn't feel right. Whether she killed them immediately or not depended on her mood. Right now, she felt like making her presence fully known before engaging with her target. Unless the target was a total moron, they would be able to notice her coming.

She eventually ended up at a small, cozy wooden house. She knocked on the door. This was also all according to her whims. She could easily enter without permission or pass through the walls of the house...or obliterate the entire building from the outside. But she felt like waiting for the occupant's response.

"Hello." A man opened the door. He was young but plain, wearing worker's clothes. He appeared to be some sort of god, but not one of any level the UEG cared about. "Can I help you?"

"I am the Ultimate Extermination God. You may refer to me as UEG for short."

"Uhh... What...? You're pretty weird, aren't you?" The man made no effort to hide his displeasure.

"I have introduced myself. Who are you?"

"Touichirou. Touichirou Hakamada."

"Hm. Sounds like the name of a fool."

"That's the last thing I want to hear from you. Anyway, that doesn't answer my question. What do you want?"

"I am here to exterminate you, of course. I was locked up in this world, a

sin for which all its denizens are culpable. As such, I have come to deliver your punishment. So die."

"No way. Why should I die?"

"I am not asking you to kill yourself. I am saying I will kill you."

"That doesn't change anything. I don't want to die either way." Touichirou sighed. "You look pretty strong, huh?" he said, scratching his head.

"Very strong. There are none who are stronger. I have never met a being who could overpower me." Her memories of the time she was trapped were vague, but if she didn't remember who had done it, she was still technically telling the truth.

"So, you want to fight? Me and you?"

"Correct. Do not stand there and allow me to kill you. That would be no different from suicide. Struggle to the utmost to save yourself."

"What the heck? This is a huge pain in the ass. There's no way I can get out of it, is there? If you want me to join you, I'd be more than happy to."

"There is no such thing. There is only one method by which you can preserve your life. To kill me!"

"You sure?"

"Absolutely!"

Touichirou sighed in response to the UEG's unwavering declaration. It was a deep enough sigh that anyone watching would get concerned.

"This is really a pain in the ass! But looks like you're going to make me fight no matter what. Good grief. That's all I can think! Okay then, let's go somewhere else. I don't want to ruin the crops here."

"I cannot imagine the battle will be so great in scope, but that is fine. If you wish to go somewhere else, feel free."

"See you there." With that, Touichirou vanished.

She couldn't feel his presence anywhere close by, so he must have gone a considerable distance. The UEG teleported after him.

Chapter 19 — I Was Erased, but Sorry, That Is Not Enough to Kill Me

They were in a sea of stars. It was not the "sea" that contained the celestial foundations that housed their worlds, but a different space ruled by different laws. It was a universe beginning with a big bang. It was a world where planets revolved around stars, stars gathered into constellations, constellations mixed with nebulae to form galaxies, galaxies came together to make up clusters, and clusters were organized into superclusters. That was the kind of world it was.

"You seem to be a higher-level being than I first thought. I did not expect something like this," the UEG called out to him.

Of course, Touichirou had hidden his potential. He didn't want to stand out. It was hard not to stand out when he was a League Member of the Slow Life League, but he had done everything he could to leave things to the other members so that he didn't have to use his own powers. He just wanted to live an easygoing life that made his powers superfluous.

"You too. I was hoping you wouldn't be able to follow me here." In truth, the barrier surrounding Belm was no obstacle for him. He could leave anytime he wished and could have ended the war in a heartbeat. But he didn't care about that. He just wanted a peaceful rural life. If he could keep that up for the rest of the world's short lifespan, he'd be happy. "But you ended up following me anyway. Hey, can I suggest something?"

"Oh? A suggestion for me? I suppose I will hear you out."

"Don't mess with the world we just came from."

"Very well. I am not so skilled at reconstruction, so I cannot guarantee I would be able to return it to its former state. And I certainly do not wish it destroyed."

"In that case, why don't we quit the fight altogether? It's a pain in a lot of ways."

"You speak far too much. Do you not understand buying time will

accomplish nothing for you? No matter. Whether you wish it or not, we begin now!”

The UEG vanished. Touichirou would have been happy if she had decided to run away, but given how motivated she was, he couldn’t bring himself to believe that had happened. Searching out her location, he jumped to where she was, finding her in no time.

She had grown enormous. Even in this space, where there was so little to gauge size against, she was obviously huge. Enough that she could hold a planet in her hands.

“Going all out from the start would end things too quickly. Let us begin with a small test!”

“That’s ridiculous!”

With a swing of her arm, the UEG threw a planet at him. Touichirou hurriedly dodged out of the way. If there had been any life on that planet, it would have been wiped out in an instant. The planet vanished into the depths of the universe.

Touichirou grew in size to match the UEG. Size made no difference to the power he could wield, but if he allowed her to remain so much larger than him, he would be overwhelmed mentally. In a battle between gods, that could be enough to tip the scales.

“You can become large too. What of it? If that is all, I can still grow even larger.” The UEG expanded again, swinging a hand above her head. As she did, stars began to gather in her palm. Planets, asteroids, stars, and gasses, the material that served to make up intelligent life gathered together into the form of a spear.

Such an act was pointless. She could have just attacked using her power directly. But these kinds of bluffs were important. If the opponent recognized it as a powerful attack, that would be enough to make the attack actually stronger. That was what a battle between gods looked like.

The UEG threw her spear. Touichirou dodged around it, gathering stars as well. After he had collected enough, he threw them forward without aiming. They exploded outwards, showering the UEG like buckshot.

“Such an attack is meaningless!” she shouted, pulling out a black hole and absorbing the assault.

“A black hole? Is that the real thing?”

“Who knows? It looked like one, so I used it as one!”

At some point, they had tacitly agreed it would be a battle using celestial bodies as weapons. The two continued to grow ever more massive, using galaxies, clusters, and superclusters against each other. No intelligent life in the universe would be able to stand it. Two unbelievably massive beings had suddenly appeared and were bringing the cosmos to ruin.

"Hmm. This will get us nowhere," the UEG suddenly said. After having wreaked such havoc in this universe, Touichirou couldn't help but feel exasperated, though he could hardly complain, as he'd been just as active a participant in the destruction. "Very well, let us move on to the next stage of our test!"

Light burst from the UEG's body. In an instant, the universe around them was incinerated. The attack struck in literally every direction possible, leaving no room to run or hide. It would be pointless for Touichirou to do the same thing. It was an attack that could destroy an entire universe. There would be no canceling it out, only overpowering it.

He would have to defend against it, but that wouldn't be so difficult. He just needed to go to another universe. He fled to a parallel world, one where a disaster like the UEG had never appeared.

"I thought this place had nothing to do with her, but it's already a mess..."

"That is *because* I was never here. I would strike down anyone who attempted to sow such chaos in my own world."

"Dammit!"

The UEG unleashed light again. Touichirou fled to yet another parallel world, but her light was already there. He tried to flee again as the attack scorched him, but the UEG was always one step ahead. In the end, his only option was to take the attack head on.

"Hmm. Though I was holding back, I am impressed you survived."

"Now it's my turn!" He had been unmotivated before, but he was starting to feel the urge to fight back.

Touichirou headed to a universe governed by entirely different laws and immediately erased the one he had just come from along with all the parallel universes connected to it.

"Honestly...I fail to understand what you are attempting to do in destroying all the parallel universes like that." The UEG appeared behind him, calm and composed.

"I don't want to hear that from you."

She had followed him from an entirely different world first, so it was no surprise she could follow him here as well. Now what would follow would be even greater tragedy. They would both leap between universes, trying to predict their opponent's moves and erase their destination before they made it there. They would attempt to jump out of the dimensional space occupied by their opponent and destroy it from the outside. As they did, their opponent would jump to an even higher level universe and attempt the same thing.

There should have been no end to the cycle, but suddenly there was. Touichirou's attack had erased the universe containing the UEG.

"Is it over?" They had erased numerous universes. He was naturally exhausted at this point and was starting to feel fed up with the whole situation.

"Hmm. It was entertaining in a way, but I have grown bored. It is no different from a quarrel between children. I make an invincible barrier, so you fire a beam that can destroy invincible barriers, so I make a barrier that can stop even that. I ended up losing track of what we were doing and made a mistake with my timing."

How many times had they repeated this cycle? The UEG was standing behind Touichirou once again.

"You... You should have been erased." He had watched her being erased along with the universe around her, failing to escape in time. And in truth, up until that point, the UEG had ceased to exist.

"Indeed, I was erased, but sorry, that is not enough to kill me. Now, if something like that takes you by surprise, I feel as if I have seen the limits of your abilities. Let us bring an end to this."

"Someone like you...was locked up?" It was impossible to believe someone this powerful had been sealed away in one small world in one small universe.

"Well, it was done precisely because I could not be killed." The UEG approached him from behind. Though they had long since gone past the point of needing physical bodies, they were still in humanoid form.

Touichirou spun around and swung his fist. She caught his punch and crushed his fist in her hand. Her power then flowed into him, restraining him from within. She had taken hold of him, leaving him paralyzed.

"What was the point of all that fighting?" The moment they made physical contact, Touichirou understood the difference in their power. He

understood there was no way he could ever have beaten her.

“Ah, yes, I simply wished to do something exciting! So I will praise you. You are quite impressive for keeping up with me this long.” The UEG slowly wound up and threw a punch of her own. Unable to dodge her small fist, it struck him and blew his head straight off.

His body shattered and dissipated. Their fight, which had destroyed numerous universes, ended with a single punch.

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“Hmm...he should be unable to restore himself from here.” The UEG made extra sure that Touichirou had been thoroughly erased. After acting all high and mighty, it would be embarrassing if he turned around and did exactly the same thing she had done. After waiting a while, there was no sign of him returning. It was possible he had returned to life somewhere else, but if he wasn’t going to appear here, she didn’t care.

The UEG returned to the world she had come from, appearing in Touichirou’s village.

“I am starting to feel a little tired. I suppose I will borrow Touichirou’s house to rest.” Though she wasn’t physically tired at all, even gods felt mental fatigue. The boredom of repeating the same thing over and over could lead to them feeling tired and losing motivation.

The UEG waltzed into Touichirou’s house and immediately fell asleep.

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Yogiri and Tomochika walked down the middle of the road, heading south. The strange grass continued to waver in its unsettling way, but was no danger as long as they didn’t get close to it. They were on the west side of the continent, so they could see the ocean to their right. To their left was grassland that continued on into a forest a little farther away. The way the trees and their branches writhed made it seem like they were infected by the Seyla as well. They could clearly tell they were not normal living things.

After heading south for a while, they came upon a pale, translucent wall. It extended to the left and right and up into the sky, thoroughly blocking their progress. It appeared to be the area boundary they had heard about, invisible

until they approached it.

"Can we get through this?"

"Who knows? If it's the same as the barrier around the continent, we should be able to walk through it since we don't have the Gift." Yogiri tried touching the wall, and his hand passed through without issue. "Looks like we can do it. Okay, let's hold hands."

"Why?!"

"If something weird happens, we'll be in trouble. I want to be careful."

"O-Oh. Well, okay." Tomochika reluctantly offered her hand, which Yogiri took in his.

"Okay, let's step through on three." After a short count, they jumped into the wall, passing through without issue. Turning back, they could see the road they had followed to get there.

"Looks like nothing happened."

"It would have been a problem if it had."

The road continued forward, so they started walking again. After climbing a gentle hill, they saw a cliff in front of them.

"Huh?" Even without turning around to check, they knew there had been no branches on the road. There was no way they could have gone the wrong way. Yogiri stepped up to the edge of the cliff, checking to see if the road continued at the bottom. Below the edge of the cliff was a sea of billowing white clouds filling the air. "What the..."

With no idea what he was looking at, he peered farther down. Through gaps in the clouds, he could see the bottom, the ocean, but it was unimaginably far away.

"Uhh...what's going on? We had to cross the ocean to get here, didn't we? Are we in the sky now?!"

"Did we go the wrong way?"

"I'm pretty sure this is a bigger problem than getting lost!"

"But we could see the ocean the whole time we were walking here, right?"

They tried looking to the west, but the ocean they had seen before had been replaced by a sea of clouds.

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“Yeah, we could,” Tomochika confirmed. “So I never thought we were in the sky.”

“Even if that’s the real ocean down there, isn’t it weird? The Neutral Zone is supposed to be in this direction.”According to what they had heard from Matsuo of the Slow Life League, Belm was two thousand kilometers long from north to south, and they were in the center of the western region. They had walked with the ocean to their right. So if there was nothing but ocean in front of them, that meant they were in the southwestern corner of the continent. But there was no way they had walked a thousand kilometers in such a short time. Furthermore, if this was the southwestern region, they should have been at the Suudoria Academy’s home base, but they saw nothing like that.

“Did we make a mistake somewhere?” Yogiri was confused, trying to figure out what was wrong with the information they had received.

Chapter 20 — Interlude: If I Can't Turn Them Back to Normal, I'll End Up Breaking My Promise Again

The Sage Van sat across from Alice in a room in her luxurious castle, which was built within her world. They were having a meeting of Sages. As this was Alice's world, she was there in the flesh, but Van was only an image.

"This is it?! Why are you the only one here?!" Alice had requested the meeting, asking all Sages to join.

"Ha ha ha. I don't normally go to meetings like this, but I figured I'd come say hi to everyone. Things would have been pretty lonely if I hadn't shown up, huh?"

Participation in these meetings was voluntary, and nothing decided here would be able to compel the others, so there wasn't much meaning to it. It was more like, "If you're free, let's get together and talk." Van had come this time because he remembered he had said he would try to create new Sages himself. Of course, he had totally forgotten about that, so he hadn't made any progress. Still, he had made a promise to Sion, so he had wanted to at least give an excuse for his lack of progress.

"Sion normally comes to these kinds of things, doesn't she?"

"Sion's dead, you know."

"Oh, really? There was someone strong enough to kill her?"

Sages normally took no interest in the actions of other Sages. Sion's attempt to take leadership over the others was a notable exception. If even she wasn't going to be there, their incoherent meetings could become even more chaotic, although with such low attendance, there wasn't much fear of that happening.

"There was a guy collecting Philosopher's Stones. Yeah, let me fill you in a bit."

At their previous meeting, they had heard that Santarou was dead. Shortly after meeting Yogiri Takatou, Lain, Sion, and Raiza had also died. Some flashy woman with Yogiri had taken Alice's own Philosopher's Stone. Shigeto had then showed up in disguise as Yoshifumi to attack Alice, so Yoshifumi was likely dead as well. Afterwards, Shigeto had summoned three Philosopher's Stones. He'd said he picked them up from nowhere in particular, so they may have been taken from Sages who had already been dead, but it was also possible three more Sages had died at some point. As such, at most, nine Sages had either died or lost their powers, she reported.

"Nine, huh? That's kind of a big deal. I don't remember how many Sages there are, but that's almost all of them, right? At worst, we might be the last two left."

"You make it sound like it has nothing to do with you."

"Doesn't it? All we do is look after our own territories, right?"

"But what are we going to do? With the others gone, there's no one to protect those regions anymore. If an Aggressor shows up, we're done for, right?"

"Gramps says there's nothing we can do about that. We can't change the size of the areas just because a Sage dies." The Great Sage neither attempted to make new Sages nor gave the areas to another Sage when one died. The decision of how to deal with undefended areas had been left up to the Sages themselves.

"Speaking of which, what did you call this meeting for?"

"Nothing in particular. I lost my Philosopher's Stone, so I was just wondering what to do."

"I guess that makes sense. But you made this room with your power, right?"

"This kind of papier-mâché is the best I can do. I'm not even invincible in this world anymore. If someone attacks I'm a total goner."

"I have a bunch of Philosopher's Stones. Do you want one?"

"I don't know if I can trust you not to forget you promised me one right away."

"Ahh. Yeah, sorry. I forgot about my promise to make more Sages. I came here today to apologize to Sion about that."

"Why not try to make some new Sages now? You can just toss them into some of the empty areas."

“Oh, yeah. I’ll think about it.” An M unit from Belm would probably be strong enough to work as a Sage outside the continent. That’s what he had thought of when Sion had asked the same thing of him.

“Not like I’m going to bet on it, though.”

“Your lack of trust kind of hurts. Anyway, for now, I’ll bring you a Philosopher’s Stone.”

“Speaking of which, why do you have more than one?”

“You don’t know? Gramps asked me to take care of all the extras. Whenever a Sage candidate becomes a full fledged Sage, I go and give them one.”

“Oh yeah, I guess you gave me my first one too. I thought you were just there as a representative of the Great Sage.”

“Do you think that’s unfair?” Van asked.

“Not really. Having more than one is just a waste for me. One is good enough.”

“Where are you right now?”

“The island where the Empire of Ent is.”

“I guess I’ll be able to find you if I go there.”

“I won’t hold my breath,” Alice said. “Doesn’t look like anyone else is coming, so I guess we can call it a day.

“I’ll bring it. I swear.” Their meeting over, Van returned his consciousness to his body.

He opened his eyes. He was surrounded by walls of flesh. They were like bare muscle, like he was inside the digestive tract of some enormous organism. The floors and ceiling were the same along with the sofa he was sitting on and the table in front of him. He was within the ever-expanding Seyla. Van was giving direction to its growth, using it as material to build.

He decided to get the Philosopher’s Stone ready before he forgot. Standing up, he approached one of the walls of flesh, which parted for him. The gap revealed a hallway made of the same material, which he walked down.

As he walked, the hallway changed shape, creating a path to his intended destination. He arrived at the core of the Seyla. There was an almost human shape stuck to one of the walls inside. Reaching out a hand, the figure split open, and something like a tongue emerged from it. On that tongue were ten transparent stones. They were the entirety of the Philosopher’s Stones the

Great Sage had left in his care.

As he reached out to grab one, he realized something was wrong. The stones were all connected to each other. Though they had been ten distinct stones before, they had started fusing into one. As he watched, they began to transform. They melded together and grew, taking on the color of skin before growing arms and legs, taking on a human shape.

As it grew heavier, it slipped off of the tongue and struck the ground, still growing. As Van watched in shock, the stones finished their transformation into a girl who looked to be fifteen or sixteen years old.

“Oh, I see. That’s why we’re supposed to keep them inside living things to store them.” Nothing like this had ever happened when he had pulled the stones out before, so it may have been a just-in-case kind of warning.

The girl sat up on the floor of Seyla. She had unconsciously formed a barrier to block the Seyla from infecting her. She looked up at Van in confusion.

“This is bad. If I can’t turn them back to normal, I’ll end up breaking my promise again...”

More than the fact the stones had transformed into a girl right in front of him, he was concerned about no longer being able to fulfill his promise to deliver a Philosopher’s Stone to Alice.

MY INSTANT DEATH ABILITY IS SO OVERPOWERED, NO ONE IN THIS OTHER WORLD STANDS A CHANCE AGAINST ME!

Side Story

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Unclean

Seishin City in H Prefecture was a designated health care city with a population of about five hundred thousand. Placed between two major cities, it sprang up during the construction of a travel route between them. Bordering both the ocean and mountains, it was overflowing with scenic beauty and had been a popular location for the wealthy to build their homes since the late 19th century. Due to the strong influence of Western culture on Japan during that time period, many of the mansions there were built in a Western style.

There was one such mansion built a small distance from the city. Currently uninhabited, it had gained a reputation for being haunted. Normally, people would stay away from a haunted house. Any ordinary adult wouldn't even consider going there. But children were different. Whether it was curiosity, testing one's courage, or dating, children would often mistake recklessness for courage and approach extraordinarily dangerous places.

"Hey, let's not do this."

It was evening. Four children were walking a short distance out of town. Their objective was to inspect the allegedly haunted mansion. A particularly brazen boy walked at the front of the group. A more serious boy wearing glasses was a short distance behind him. Taking up the rear were two girls, one bored and uninterested, the other nervous and fidgeting.

"Okay? We're going to be middle school students this spring. Should we really be doing something so childish?"

"Really? My sister is in university and she always goes ghost hunting."

"That's for a totally different reason though, isn't it?"

"What do you mean?"

"It's fine if you don't understand. That just means you're still a kid."

"It's not like there are actually ghosts there. It just *feels* like it."

"But abandoned buildings are still dangerous."

"Because of the broken glass and stuff? That's why we have gloves."

"That's not what I mean. Delinquents and homeless people hang out in

abandoned places like that. They're a lot more dangerous than ghosts."

"But we've already come this far..." Faced with a concrete danger, the boy in the lead hesitated. However, perhaps luckily, they hadn't made it so far out of the city as to be outside the reach of civilization. The roads were still paved, there were still street lights, and the city was only a short walk behind them. Truth be told, though it was called a haunted house, it was really just a slightly older building.

Following a little used road, they quickly made it to their destination. In front of them was a huge, two-story mansion built in a Western style.

"It doesn't really feel abandoned, does it?"

"Yeah...it looks old, but it's not in bad shape. Maybe we shouldn't go in..."

The children hesitantly approached. And then they noticed it.

There was a figure in the second floor window. They could see a faint shadow in the glass of the dark room. Something was there. And it was clearly looking down at them.

With a scream, the children ran away as fast as they could.

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"I feel like this house stands out too much..." Yogiri Takatou murmured as he watched the children flee.

"I was told no one came to this run-down place..." Asaka Takatou said at his side. As a staff member of the Independent Higher Order Life Form Research Institute, her primary responsibility was raising and educating Yogiri.

"But it's only been a few days and we've already seen how many people?"

"Yeah...I told them it would be better to just live in town."

When Yogiri had enrolled in school as a fifth-grade student, he had moved into an ordinary house in the city. After the incident with the Cult, staying in the city had proved difficult, so he had returned to the Institute, and now he had moved here. It had been a year and a half since the autumn of that incident. His classmates had witnessed his power. While it wasn't especially clear that it was Yogiri who had done something, they couldn't risk sending him to the same school like nothing had happened.

The Institute had no issue transferring him to another school right away, but the incident had clearly shown how lacking their investigative and protective operations had been. As such, they had spent some time making more in-depth preparations. Luckily, Yogiri had already finished the elementary school curriculum while studying at home. There was no need to force him back into an elementary school, so with his approval, he was sent to a middle school this time.

That spring, he had moved to Seishin City in H Prefecture to attend school. The Institute had prepared this home for him and his guardian, Asaka.

"If we lived in the city, the Institute wouldn't be able to help much if something happened, apparently," Asaka said.

"I'll be at school, though, so I don't think it makes a difference."

"I guess so. If someone attacks the school, it'll be a pretty big deal."

Considering Yogiri's past, that was hardly out of the question, but there was no way they could simply lock him up again. With Yogiri himself saying he wanted to go to school, the Institute had no choice but to expend every effort to grant that wish for him.

"By the way, why this city, of all places?" Yogiri asked.

"The old facility was no good anymore, so they moved it here." There was another mysterious underground space located here, so they had decided to make use of it. The Institute researched many dangerous individuals besides Yogiri. In order to accommodate them without risking encounters with society at large, they locked them away in a huge underground space. Yogiri was technically one of their research subjects, so they wanted him as close to the facility as possible. Yogiri himself had no intention of running wild, and generally went along with the Institute's requests.

"Wouldn't it be smarter to make people think that someone is living here?"

"Yeah...I think I'll tell my boss that." Asaka wasn't fond of her home being used for children to test their courage either.

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A week after Yogiri entered middle school, life was moving on without issue. Doing what he could to avoid getting too close to any of his classmates, he kept up amicable relationships with the people around him. He

thought that was best. While it was a little sad, anyone he got too deeply involved with would likely get dragged into the chaos of his situation.

With that in mind, it may have been better for him not to go to school at all, but Asaka thought it was too dangerous to raise him without any connection to society at large. The Institute had also decided that, whether they liked it or not, it was best to instill in him the identity of a Japanese citizen. As a result, Yogiri was forced into a rather delicate situation.

"A haunted house?"

"Yeah, my friend said she went there and saw something. Wanna check it out?"

"That sounds stupid."

After class was over, Yogiri overheard a conversation. Curious, he turned to watch. The one giving the invitation was Mari Matsushima. The one who seemed opposed was the class representative, Ichiko Mita.

"Hey," Yogiri called out to them. Though he wasn't supposed to get too deeply involved with others, that didn't mean he couldn't talk with anyone. That would have made school pointless. "That 'haunted house' is probably where I live."

"Huh? Really?"

"Of course. There's no such thing as haunted houses."

"You live outside the city, Takatou?"

"Yeah, on the north side." Yogiri gave them his general address. It lined up perfectly with Mari's so-called haunted house. "So if you could, tell your friend that someone's living there. We don't like people always daring each other to come to our house."

"You see?" Ichiko chided her friend. "Your dumb courage tests and occult research are causing problems for people."

"Huh. But still, I heard there was an accident there."

"Hey, don't be so rude! He just said he lives there!"

"An accident? I don't think there was anything like that." Yogiri tilted his head. Although it was an old mansion, there were no signs of fire or other serious damage. He couldn't think of anything that pointed to evidence of there being an accident there in the past.

"Apparently, someone died there. Some noble used to own the house, and some family trouble ended up turning bloody. It doesn't really matter if someone lives there; there could still be ghosts."

“Are you sure? I’ve never seen a ghost there.” It was true; he had never seen a ghost at that particular house. He had seen plenty of strange things elsewhere, though. “Also, whether they were nobles or not, if you go back far enough you could probably find stories of people dying in any house, don’t you think?”

“You’re causing problems for Takatou, so give it up,” Ichiko interjected again.

“Well, if someone’s living there, there’s no point in going—oh! If that’s your house, Takatou, does that mean your family is rich?”

“Hey! What’re you saying? That’s totally rude!”

“No clue,” Yogiri answered. “I have no idea how much money we have.”

“I always thought you were super rich. How much is your allowance?”

“Would you just leave him alone, Mari?!”

“What’s wrong? We’re friends. Asking about his allowance is normal.”

“Friends? You’ve barely ever talked to him.” Ichiko sighed. Yogiri was also a bit taken aback by suddenly being called her friend. He’d never felt that way about her.

“I don’t get an allowance. When I need something, they buy it for me.”

“What?! That’s like having unlimited money, isn’t it?! Okay, I’m definitely Takatou’s friend, then!”

“Are we friends? We haven’t talked that much.”

“We’re classmates, right? That makes us friends.”

“Oh, okay. But yeah, stay away from my house.” It might have been normal for kids to play at their friends’ houses, but he wanted to avoid that. Getting any more involved with him would cause problems for them.

“Okay...I get it. I’ll go ghost hunting somewhere else.”

“Why do you care about ghosts so much?” Yogiri couldn’t help but ask.

“I know there’s probably no such thing, but what if there is? What if there are supernatural things out there? I think it would be interesting. Don’t you think a world where we can explain everything is so boring?!”

“I think a world where we can explain everything logically would be more peaceful. And either way, there are still plenty of things science can’t explain yet.”

“There’s plenty of interesting stuff besides the occult, right?” Ichiko clearly didn’t approve of Mari’s interest in the subject.

“I’m allowed to like what I like, aren’t I?”

“Yeah. Do what you want.” As long as she didn’t come to his house, Yogiri didn’t care.

“Oh, that’s right. Have you heard of Lady Shirokubi?” Mari suddenly changed the topic.

“Nope.”

“What about you, Ichiko?”

“No, but what’s with the sudden change of subject?”

“Oh, I just thought with the two of you here, it was perfect. It’s a pretty common ghost story. Its name sounds like ‘white neck,’ right? So that’s what it looks like. Everything from its neck up is all white. And it chases you forever. Uhh, it started when someone went ghost hunting at a grave somewhere and it followed them.”

“Come on. Your story is so sudden, and you suck at telling it, so it’s not scary at all,” Ichiko said, feeling like Mari was trying to make fun of them. Yogiri also got the feeling it was just a vague, unfinished story.

“Yeah, it was scarier when I first heard it...but whatever! So! Lady Shirokubi shows up to attack anyone who hears the story! If you don’t tell it to two or more people, she shows up and kills you!”

“What is this, a chain letter?”

“Huh? You’re not scared?”

“I don’t know what’s even supposed to be scary. Did Lady Shirokubi show up for you? Judging by your story, she should have visited you already,” Yogiri asked.

“No. I was hoping she would, but not yet.”

“Then it would have been better if you didn’t tell us, right?”

“Oh.” It seemed she hadn’t been thinking about the chain of fear at all and had just thoughtlessly followed the instructions of telling people the story.

“All right, let’s put a stop to it here,” Ichiko said. “Don’t tell anyone else about this, Mari. You neither, Takatou.”

“Okay, I won’t.” Yogiri didn’t really understand the appeal of ghost stories. There was no way he’d go out of his way to spread stories like that.

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After parting ways with Yogiri, Ichiko and Mari continued home. The two girls were childhood friends, living in the same apartment building.

“I’m glad Takatou isn’t an idiot like the other boys. They’re all so childish, but he seems more mature.”

“Yeah, though I don’t think you’re one to talk, Mari.”

“Why?!”

“Talking about occult stuff all the time doesn’t make you look that smart, you know.”

Mari sighed. “You don’t get it, do you? Being cynical and making fun of everything makes you look more childish. You need to be more passionate about something!”

“Maybe if it was something else, but ghost stories and urban legends?” Taking a step back and looking at things objectively, an honors student like Ichiko could see the logic behind what Mari was saying, but that didn’t make Mari’s obsession with the occult look any less childish to her.

“Then forget about the courage test stuff. It’s normal enough to go play at a friend’s house, right?”

“Huh? You mean Takatou’s house?” Ichiko was caught off guard by the sudden change in topic, something that happened often with Mari.

“Yeah! It’s like a huge mansion, right?”

“Give it up. You’ll just cause problems for him.”

“What?! It probably has like a dungeon under it, don’t you think?!”

“I’m not sure why you would even want to see something like that, but if there was, I doubt he’d let you see it.”

“Really? I don’t think he’d care that much.”

“Even if Takatou doesn’t mind, his family won’t like you seeing things like that.”

“But you know what they say. If you want to get the general, start by shooting his horse!”

“What do you mean, ‘but’? Is Takatou the horse, then?”

“That’s right! If we can conquer Takatou, his parents will be easy to get to!”

“Why do you need to go that far, though?”

“Hmmm...it seems like there’s a lot to be gained from being friends with Takatou...”

“Don’t make friends just to make a profit.”

“It’s not just about that—” Mari’s voice suddenly cut off and she turned around.

“What’s wrong?”

“I felt something strange behind us. No way, is it Lady Shirokubi?!”

“Definitely not. It could be a pervert or something, though...” Ichiko had never seen someone like that herself, but she had seen a lot of news about people like that on the community bulletin board. It was best if they were careful.

“Hmm. I don’t mind if it’s a ghost, but I don’t want any perverts following us.”

“Not that I’d expect either of them to show up in broad daylight like this.” Ichiko turned around and looked just in case. As expected, there was nothing there. Mari was likely just attributing special meaning to nothing since she thought about the occult so much. She turned back to say that, but froze. On the road in front of them was a person with a ghostly pale face.

Huh?

Before she could get a good look, the person disappeared.

“What’s wrong?” Mari hadn’t seen anything. A girl like her would have made a huge uproar after seeing something like that.

“Nothing.” Ichiko decided she must have been seeing things after all of Mari’s weird stories.

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Although Ichiko thought it was all in her imagination, just seeing things after hearing so many weird stories from Mari, the more times she saw it, the harder it was to write the image off as a mistake. Ichiko saw the suspicious figure with the stark white face numerous times. On the other side of the train crossing. On the sidewalk opposite her. In the glass windows of the stores she walked by. It was hard to tell what the figure was since it was rather far away, but there was definitely something there.

For some reason, only Ichiko could see it. Despite walking with her to school every time, Mari didn’t seem to notice anything. If it was just something odd she was seeing, it could be left at being an unpleasant experience that she could ignore. But the figure was getting closer. As it approached, its bizarre nature was getting clearer and clearer. It didn’t have a face. The apparition took all sorts of forms, always wearing different clothes, sometimes a man and sometimes a woman. The one thing that always stayed

the same was that where the face should have been, there was only a blank white space.

Ichiko didn't believe in ghosts or the supernatural. She thought that once someone died, that was it for them. She didn't believe in anything that violated the laws of physics. But then, what was she seeing? Realistically, she could only think it was something in her head, in which case, she should head to a hospital.

But she couldn't ask her parents or go to a doctor. She didn't believe it was just a hallucination. If it were, her whole grasp on reality would crumble. She had to believe she was seeing something real.

Day by day, she was getting worn down. The apparition hadn't caused her any direct harm, but the mental stress was causing her to lose sleep and robbing her of her appetite.

"You don't seem so good lately. Are you okay?" Mari asked. Class had ended without Ichiko realizing it. Maybe because she wasn't sleeping well, she often lost track of time.

"It's your fault!" Ichiko shouted, surprising even herself. She didn't believe in the supernatural. There was no way what was happening was Mari's fault, so there was no point in blaming her. But she was at her limit. "Please...help me..."

She was well past keeping up appearances.

◇ ◇ ◇

"What should we do...?"

Mari, Ichiko, and Yogiri were talking in a park near the school. With them were Akina Yokoyama and Ririno Araki, friends of Mari who shared her interest in the occult.

"This is so weird! I was the one who told you about Lady Shirokubi, right?! Why is this happening now?!" Akina shouted at Mari. She didn't know what they were supposed to do if the ghost started appearing.

"It looks like once you hear from someone who actually saw it, you start seeing it yourself..." After hearing Ichiko's story, Mari had eventually also begun to see the white-faced apparition. At first she'd been thrilled, but her delight didn't last long. It was an ominous, uncanny feeling, watching the ghost slowly approaching her. Once it reached her side, she couldn't imagine

things would end well. Most likely she would be killed. She was almost certain of that.

So Mari had asked Akina if she knew how to deal with the ghost, at which point Akina had also started to see it. Now, they could see what looked like a woman in a white robe standing about ten meters away. Her face was smooth and featureless like an egg shell, and she did nothing but stand there.

“Umm, does that mean now that you’ve told me about it, I’m going to start seeing it? I feel like I’m being caught in the crossfire here.” Yogiri seemed taken by surprise.

“Sorry. Ichiko saw it after I told her about it, so I thought you might be involved too...”

“But I’m not. How long did it take you to start seeing the ghost after hearing about it from Mita?”

“About a day.”

“But I didn’t hear about it from anyone,” Ririno added. She had also started seeing the ghost, but Mari thought Akina had only called her here to ask for advice.

“Really?”

“Yeah. So I don’t think it has anything to do with talking about it. Maybe the curse is contagious just from being around people who saw it?”

“Sorry. I was always interested in the occult and the supernatural, so I wanted to see something, but I never thought something like this would happen...”

“What the hell are you saying?!” Ichiko shouted. “This started happening because you told me that stupid story! Take some responsibility!”

But there was nothing Mari could do. “That’s easy to say, but none of us ever thought it would actually happen!”

“Okay, okay, let’s calm down.” Ririno was relatively calm compared to the others.

“Do you know anything we can do, Ririno?”

“Yeah. In times like this, you should leave it to a professional.”

“You mean like an exorcist? I don’t know any.”

“You probably heard about him too, Mari. We have a senior who lives at a temple. According to the rumors he’s really spiritually strong and can even see ghosts. Of course, there’s no way he’d play around with us if we’re just messing with the occult. But I thought if we told him we’re actually cursed,

he might give us some advice, so I called him."

"Seriously?"

"Yeah. He said he'd come today—"

"What is that..."

The group turned around at the sound of a voice coming from behind them. A boy was standing there, wearing the uniform of Seishin High School. He must have been the senior Ririno had mentioned. Mari had only heard rumors about him, so she didn't know much.

"Umm, are you Terashima?"

Ignoring Ririno's question, the boy dropped to his knees and vomited.

"Looks like things are already going wrong..." Ichiko was disappointed.

"But that means he can tell you're actually possessed, right?! I'm sorry, but we need your help!" Mari was desperate.

"You've gotta be joking. There's no way I can handle something like this," the boy said, lurching back to his feet.

"But we have no idea what to do!"

"There's nothing I can do on my own! You need people and preparations!"

"So, you'll help?!"

"Yes! If we don't do anything, it'll be a disaster! Luckily, you still have some time. Come back to the temple with me!"

"Uhh, but..." Mari hesitated. While it was true they were in trouble, she wasn't sure she could trust this high school boy she had never met before.

"Don't come, then! See if I care!"

"Okay, we'll go! We'll go, so help us!" They didn't have any other choice. She decided to rely on him. Ichiko, Akina, and Ririno all agreed.

"Okay, I'll be going home," said Yogiri.

"Takatou?!" Mari was shocked. She had been sure Yogiri would go with them.

"If you don't come, you're on your own," Terashima said, clearly having no intention of forcing him to come along.

"I haven't seen anything, and I know some people from a temple as well. It's a good idea to look into other ways to fix this too, right?"

"Okay; be careful."

"Yep. I'll probably be pretty surprised if I see the ghost, though."

"I don't think it'll end with you being surprised..."

Even in this situation, Yogiri marched to the beat of his own drum.

◇ ◇ ◇

Mari and the other girls had gathered at a temple in the mountains some days later. They had been let inside the temple proper, and had been enclosed within a ring of sacred rope. Around them was an array of Buddhist altar equipment, though Mari didn't know exactly what they were for.

"Seems like this is getting serious."

Around them was a ring of monks chanting. In addition to the Buddhist monks, Shinto priests and even Christian ministers had gathered to prepare for Lady Shirokubi's arrival. There were even more people outside the temple hall, making additional preparations.

Lady Shirokubi always approached slowly, disappearing once she was noticed. Every time she appeared, she got closer and closer. Yesterday, she had appeared right at Mari's bedside, staring down at her with a blank, featureless face.

Mari had a feeling the next time she saw Lady Shirokubi would be the last. She didn't know if it was actually the Lady Shirokubi from the ghost story. It seemed a little different from the story she was familiar with, but it was an easy name they could ascribe to the apparition. They couldn't just call the ghost "it" all the time.

They heard a crash come from somewhere before the whole temple began to rattle. Mari could tell instinctively that something terrifying had arrived.

It was starting.

The moment Mari thought that, something flew through the paper sliding door towards them. The object plowed through the altar implements and crashed into the Buddha statue inside the temple. It was Terashima.

"U-Umm..."

It seemed he was alive, but he lay motionless on the ground.

They could hear screams from outside. The sound of something being crushed, or maybe ripped apart, echoed repeatedly. Mari had assumed that being cursed by Lady Shirokubi would end up with them getting sick or suffocating, something far more plain or quiet. But then the roof of the temple was torn away, revealing a jarringly beautiful night sky. Rather than something vague and mysterious like a curse, this was just physical

destruction. The people outside were being thrown around, and the temple itself was being destroyed.

It was a massacre.

The white-faced figure was slowly approaching. Those who tried to stand in its way were crushed, twisted, ripped apart, and scattered. Nothing worked against it. The Buddhist chants, Shinto prayers, crosses, vajra, khakkhara staffs, swords, spears, and guns were all equally useless.

Mari's composure was easily shattered. Without a clue what she could possibly do, she just clung to her friends.

The figure moved like it was walking through an empty field. What chance did the monks have of stopping it? She didn't know at this point, but it was clear nothing else was working.

It was getting closer. It made its way into the remains of the now unrecognizable temple. If it had really wanted to, it could have killed them all in an instant. But it seemed to be determined to get close to them first. It would only kill them when it was directly beside them.

The monks positioned around them stood their ground, determined to fight until their last breath. But as if to laugh at their resolve, the apparition brandished its power, slaughtering them effortlessly.

"Someone...help..."

With no one left to protect them, Mari squeezed her eyes shut. She couldn't bear to watch her certain death approaching. But no matter how long she waited, nothing happened. Not seeing what was happening, keeping her eyes closed was only making her fear grow stronger.

Finally, she timidly opened her eyes. Lady Shirokubi was nowhere to be seen. Maybe the ghost had hidden, hoping to scare them further. That was Mari's first guess, but no matter how long she waited, the apparition never reappeared.

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It suddenly appeared in the corner of Asaka's living room. It was a woman in a white robe, with a blank white face, standing a few meters away from Asaka herself.

"Looks like it starts the same distance away from you as the person you caught it from." Despite the obviously bizarre situation, Yogiri was calm.

“It seems uninterested in spreading its curse,” said Dougen, a monk in a black robe. He had once been involved with Yogiri’s village in the past and had been called here by Yogiri to deal with the bizarre situation. Having a monk show up out of nowhere was a bit of a shock to Asaka, who wished things had been explained to her beforehand.

“Looks that way. If it really wants to spread its name around, it would make more sense to have a bit of time lag,” said a third voice. For some reason, a woman in a flashy kimono and fox ears had come along with Dougen. That was far more perplexing than the monk, but Asaka had no choice but to accept it.

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“That must be why news of such a powerful apparition hasn’t gotten out yet,” Dougen commented. Lady Shirokubi killed all of those who were cursed at the same time. Since everyone related to the incident would die, information about the apparition wouldn’t spread.

“I’ve seen lots of things show up in front of Yogiri, but this is really...evil, isn’t it?” Asaka felt like the best description of the ghost was “white darkness.” The ghost’s face looked like a hole in space, revealing an empty white void. It was something that shouldn’t be perceivable by humans. The more one tried to understand it, the more confused one became. No good could come from staring at such a thing.

“Dougen, do you have a way of dealing with it?” Yogiri asked.

“I didn’t expect it to be this powerful. It will be difficult with what I have on me.” Dougen was standing on guard with a string of prayer beads in his hands.

“How about you, Miss Fox?”

“This is outside my specialty. You can’t just punch something like this, can you?”

“So that fox lady is a physical fighter, huh?” Asaka asked, pointing out something that really didn’t matter in their current situation.

“That’s right. My specialty is punching, kicking, and biting. Should I give it a try?”

“It’s fine. I’ll do something about it. That’s okay, right, Asaka?” Yogiri must have hoped Dougen and the fox would be able to handle the figure, but it was starting to look like he was the only one who could resolve it. Asaka didn’t like Yogiri using his power, but it didn’t seem like they had any other options.

“I guess it doesn’t look safe to punch it, so we don’t have a choice.”

With Asaka’s permission, Yogiri stepped closer to Lady Shirokubi. Its presence seemed to waver. It must have been taken off guard by someone approaching it without any fear or hostility. As Yogiri reached out and touched it, the apparition dissolved.

“Huh? That’s all?” Asaka was taken aback. It all seemed too easy.

“Well...anyone who tries to kill the boy dies like that. It doesn’t matter how powerful a youkai you are.”

“Oh, I guess you’re right. So, are the kids in his class going to be okay now?”

“Looks like things are pretty rough for them.”

“Really?” Yogiri seemed uneasy. They had been planning to head over to the temple themselves when Lady Shirokubi had suddenly appeared in their house.

“Your friends seem fine, but Dougen’s pals are lying all over the place. There’s an awful lot of blood.” The fox had an underling watching the temple, so she could keep an eye on what was happening there.

“Will those girls be okay? It sounds like they’ve been through a traumatic experience.” Yogiri’s brow furrowed as he recalled the incident with the Cult.

“Should we erase their memories?” the fox asked.

“You can do that?!” Asaka blurted out. She didn’t think it would be that easy.

“Of course. It’s a problem for people like me to be seen by humans, after all. When that happens, we just erase their memories of us, so it’s like it never happened.”

“‘Just’ erase them, huh?” Being able to do something that impressive so casually made Asaka wonder who this fox lady really was, but she decided it was better not to ask.

“That said, I can’t do much about all the squashed people. Can you handle that, Dougen?”

“Very well.” Dougen and the fox stepped out of the house. The temple in question was located in the mountains nearby, so it wouldn’t be a long walk.

“But seriously, what the heck was that?” Asaka asked. Ichiko Mita hadn’t broken any taboos. All she had done was hear a story from someone, which didn’t seem like it did anything in and of itself. But once one person had seen the figure, anyone who got close to her was also cursed. Asaka had no clue what the trigger for the situation had been. It all seemed nonsensical.

Then again, I guess Yogiri is even worse...

She didn’t know how powerful this ghost was, but Yogiri had erased it effortlessly. Though it was nice that things would be peaceful again, it was hard to think they could just leave things as they were. Since nothing had happened recently, Asaka had unconsciously put it out of her mind, but Yogiri’s power was terrifyingly dangerous.

Luckily, though the ghost was dangerous, erasing it hadn’t had much of an impact on the world. But if something or some group with a stronger influence on the world attacked Yogiri, what would happen if he fought back

against them?

I don't really want to think about how much damage that could cause...

All she could do was pray that no one would recklessly attack Yogiri from there on out.

Afterword

We've made it to volume 10! Double digits! Many of you may think that's nothing special, but it really feels like a big turning point, doesn't it? This is my first series to reach the double digit volume count, so it feels like I can proudly announce myself as "a double digit author" now. You may feel like there's not much to take pride in there, but these days many series end up being cut short, so I feel like this is pretty impressive.

The page count for the afterword this time is troublingly high. I don't have much to write about, so I'm not sure what to say. For starters, I guess I should advertise a bit.

・The manga *My Instant Death Ability Is So Overpowered, No One in This Other World Stands a Chance Against Me! —AΩ—* is set to release its fifth volume at the same time as this book, on December 11th! That covers up until the end of volume 2, so it's got a good climax! Please give it a read.

That's it for that advertisement, but we still need a lot more.

・The manga of *The God-Slaying Saint Who Needs No Second Strike ~ After Five Thousand Years of Slumber, the Saint Continues to Be the Strongest* will release its second volume on December 28th. It's being released by Futabasha Publishers and Monster Comics. Please give it a read as well.

Okay, two advertisements still isn't enough.

・I'll be releasing a new series next year. I can't say when it'll come out, what it'll be called, or who will be publishing it yet (except that it will be different from the publishers of the above two works), but it should be coming out sometime in the first half of next year.

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After all that advertising, I still need to write more. What can I talk about now? I guess I'll talk about games.

・PS5

I wasn't able to reserve one. I put it in my Amazon cart and my Rakuten Books cart—I did! But then the site got overloaded and crashed, so I couldn't finish the purchase. By the time I was able to get back on the site, they were all gone. There's no real need to rush it, though. I'll just have to be patient until I get the chance to buy one. Make sure you stay away from resellers as well!

・Recently I've taken a liking to the game *Carrion*. It's a retro-style Metroidvania game.

The unique point of the game is that you play as an amorphous monster. Rather than the cute, fuzzy, animal-eared mascot of some other games, you're a red blob covered in tentacles. You're a total monster. You use those tentacles to grab on to walls and attack people at high speed. Ah, yeah, you're the one attacking people. I recommend it if you like those kinds of subversive games.

It looks like I still need to fill more space, so I'll move on.

・GoTo Campaign. I feel like it's good to make use of what's available to you, so I've stayed overnight away from home four times recently. You may think it's weird to stay at a hotel that's less than a day away from your house, but visiting hot springs like that is pretty fun. They hand out coupons around my town, so I get a pretty good deal too. I've been partaking in Hyogo Prefecture's "Visit the Five Famous Hot Springs of Hyogo" campaign. As I'm writing this I'm still on the first leg, but by the time this book comes out I'll probably be into the second one. I thought that with the coupons I'd be able to buy all sorts of souvenirs for almost nothing, but it's still really easy to go over budget. Actually, I've already spent far more than I should have...

・Smart Watch

I've tried a number of ways, but not being able to tell what time it is at

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any time is really inconvenient. Huh? You thought that since it's a watch, you can tell time whenever you want? Smart watches are different. The screen uses a lot of electricity, so it often turns off to save power. You can set it to keep the screen always on, but then the battery dies super fast. If you want to see the time, you have to press the button or set it to turn the screen on when you turn your arm to look at it. You would think that would be enough, but having to take the extra time to turn the screen on yourself, or having to try over and over when it doesn't realize the screen is supposed to turn on, makes you feel like you're wasting a lot of time when all you want is to look at a clock.

So I've started thinking that the Wena is pretty convenient. I've ordered the Wena 3. It has the functions of a smart watch built into the band of an ordinary watch. That's right! The watch part is just a normal clock, so you don't have to worry about annoying things like not being able to check the time, or running out of batteries, or glare on the screen making it hard to read, or having to charge it all the time. "So it's just a digital gadget stuck to a normal watch?" you may be asking, but having functions like access to email, alarms, and heart rate monitoring makes it really convenient.

All right, that should be enough to fill up the afterword!

So finally, my thanks.

To my supervising editor. I'm sorry for leaving things until the last minute again. Thank you so much.

For the illustrator, Chisato Naruse. Thank you for your wonderful illustrations. I feel really bad for leaving things so close to the deadline all the time. I'm going to try really hard to keep a set schedule next time!

Next is volume 11. Thank you for your continued support!

Tsuyoshi Fujitaka
藤孝 剛志

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Hello, this is the illustrator, Chisato Naruse.

We've made it to the double digits! Hurray!
It's kind of moving to see the series make it so far.
As both a reader and an illustrator, I'm glad I've been able to accompany Yogiri and Tomochika on their journey for so long.

While I'm certainly curious about how our protagonists' journey will unfold now that we've made it all the way to volume 10, I'm also wondering what will happen with Asaka's story since it is getting so close to the "present." I can't wait to see what happens next!

I hope we can meet again in volume 11!

CHISATO NARUSE

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Bonus Short Story

Question Corner 5

Tomochika: Okay, hello! I'm Tomochika Dannoura, and this is Question Corner 5! This is the fifth time we've done this, huh?
Mokomoko: *Not that any of the questions really pertain to the story anymore...*
Tomochika: Now then, we've done this five times so it feels weird to explain, but just in case, we'll be using this section to respond to reader-submitted questions!
Mokomoko: *This was intended to be an easy way for us to cut corners, but collecting questions and choosing which ones to answer has ended up taking a significant amount of time!*
Yogiri: By the way, it looks like you're back in your ghost form, Mokomoko.
Mokomoko: *As I have done in the main story, I have returned to my spectral form!*
Tomochika: That's too bad; Enju was really cute. Anyway, on to the questions!

Q: Could Yogiri wipe out the Coronavirus?

Dancing Laughing

Tomochika: That's an awfully time-specific question! Is it okay for us to answer a question like this?
Mokomoko: *Well...it will serve as a good reminder of the time we lived in when we look back on it, no?*
Tomochika: Okay. What do you think, Takatou?"
Yogiri: Hmm. I won't catch it, but I'm not sure if I could wipe it out.
Tomochika: Oh, really?
Yogiri: Viruses aren't all the same, right? Even with the flu, every year it's a new form.

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Mokomoko: *Viruses are microscopic organisms that use the cells of other living creatures to replicate. Errors in that process produce changes in the virus itself. These changes happen in minuscule increments, but even so, once changed, it cannot be called the same as the original.*
Yogiri: So wiping them all out taking into account those small changes would be pretty challenging. Viruses aren't something I can really perceive, after all.
Tomochika: So it looks like it's no good, then!

Q: How good are you at video games, Yogiri?

Chinogai

Tomochika: Not that great, right?
Yogiri: I guess, but why are you answering?
Tomochika: Well...that's the impression I got watching you play *M*nster Hunter*.
Mokomoko: *But how does one decide how skilled an individual is at games in general?*
Tomochika: Fighting games have a ranking system, so it's pretty easy to understand.
Yogiri: As far as fighting games go, I can learn the commands if I work at it, but getting a combo off in an actual fight is a pretty significant accomplishment for me.
Tomochika: What about shooting games?
Yogiri: It depends on the game, but if I don't have infinite continues, I probably won't make it to the last stage.
Tomochika: Are you bad at action games?
Yogiri: I wouldn't say I'm bad at them...but I guess I would never start on "hard" mode.
Tomochika: What about dating sims?
Yogiri: Is there any skill to those?
Tomochika: I guess not. Okay, what about Soulslike games?
Yogiri: I've played them quite a bit. If it's the kind that lets you level up, I can manage somehow. If you have to just get better at the game yourself, I have a lot of trouble.
Tomochika: So basically, you love games despite being terrible at them!

Yogiri: Maybe, but I don't really want to hear that from you...

Q: Recently, I've been getting into eating strange foods. What kind of bugs are you okay with, Dannoura?

Dancing Laughing

Tomochika: Didn't we already answer a question from this guy?!
Mokomoko: *Yes, well, we haven't received all that many questions...*
Yogiri: So, could you eat bugs, Dannoura?
Tomochika: Bugs, huh? I can't say I've never thought about eating grasshoppers boiled in soy sauce, but I've never actually tried it! What about you, Takatou?
Yogiri: If they were cooked properly, I could probably eat them. Not that I have.
Tomochika: That wraps it up for this time. Please send in questions at any time! Apparently we take most questions, so feel free to send in anything!

Question Corner 5 Extra Edition

Tomochika: Okay, hello! I'm Tomochika Dannoura! This is the extra edition of Question Corner 5. There was already a Question Corner in this book, but there were some questions we couldn't fit in there, so we've put them here! We've done this five times now, so the explanation will be the same as always!
Mokomoko: *Then let us proceed to the questions right away. Ah, for the record, in accordance with the events of the plot in this volume, I have returned to my ghostly form!*
Tomochika: You don't have to explain that every time!

Q: Are Hanakawa and Alice going to be split up? Will their relationship progress from here? She's the first person who has treated Hanakawa nicely, so considering how the System affects people, I feel like she must be a really good person underneath. How is her compatibility with Hanakawa?

I'm too lazy to think of a name

Tomochika: Uhh...I don't think I know anything about that.

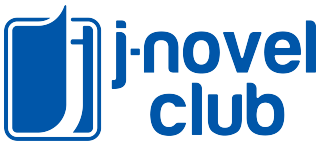
Yogiri: I'm not super interested in what's going on with Hanakawa anyway...
Tomochika: You really don't like Hanakawa, do you, Takatou?
Yogiri: Do *you*?
Tomochika: Hmm. I guess I'd feel a little bad if he died, but that's about it...
Mokomoko: *Judging by the way the plot is moving now, I am not so convinced a romance between her and Hanakawa is viable...*
Hanakawa: ...
Tomochika: Oh, Hanakawa tried to come in and say something himself, but he was too annoying, so we gagged him and tied him up in the corner.
Mokomoko: *If you read the main story, you will see that Alice has taken her leave, but it is possible she will be involved in the plot later on. So I will say that nothing is impossible, but do not get your hopes up!*

Q: If Yogiri used his power on the moon, would it explode?

Yamii

Tomochika: My first thought is that the moon isn't alive in the first place, but that never stopped you before. So what do you think?
Yogiri: No clue.
Tomochika: You don't know?!
Yogiri: I imagine if I killed the moon floating in the sky it would just stay like that...
Mokomoko: *But?*
Yogiri: For example, if the moon was some kind of huge animal, it would just die and sit there.
Tomochika: So what if the moon was going to fall and hit the earth?
Yogiri: In that case, it might explode. Generally it works out so that I won't get killed.
Mokomoko: *It seems even you do not know how your power functions that well.*
Tomochika: But if the moon exploded, I wonder what would happen to the earth...
Mokomoko: *I heard somewhere that without the gravitational pull of the moon, the earth's rotation would accelerate to the point where it would annihilate all life on the planet...*
Tomochika: Okay, let's just ignore that possibility...

Mokomoko: *Thus concludes the bonus section! We are always collecting questions, so feel free to submit them at any time!*



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My Instant Death Ability Is So Overpowered, No One in This Other World Stands a Chance Against Me! Volume 10
by Tsuyoshi Fujitaka

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Edited by Tess Nanavati

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Original Japanese edition published in 2020 by Earth Star Entertainment
This English edition is published by arrangement with Earth Star Entertainment, Tokyo
English translation © 2022 J-Novel Club LLC

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Ebook edition 1.0: May 2022